

FRENCHY
THE
STORY OF A GENTLEMAN



WILLIAM SAGE



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FRENCHY

The Story of a Gentleman

BY

WILLIAM SAGE

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CHAPTER I

THE Marquis Raymond de St. Hilaire was in his favorite seat at the Café de la Régence. On the other side of the little table sat his dear American friend, Stanley Madison. Before them were two tall glasses, in which the ice clinked refreshingly.

Large, handsome Stanley Madison was a pleasing sight to behold, and St. Hilaire admired him with all the ardor of his Celtic soul.

Measured by the Anglo-Saxon standard, St. Hilaire himself was not a large man, except in heart and spirit; but he was a fine-looking, manly, young fellow, with soft, affectionate eyes, and a mouth which would curve into the most winning of smiles; and as for

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his laugh, it was one of those buoyant, courageous laughs which make the heart cheerful to hear.

The two men had been friends for five years — ever since Madison had become a member of the American colony in Paris, and during these years Raymond had loved the attractive Madison with that idolizing affection which a younger man so often gives to one older in years and in the ways of the world.

"Raymond, my dear fellow," said Madison, speaking French with an accent which almost disguised his nationality, "I have this day made my will and appointed you my executor."

"Heavens! my friend, do not speak of dying; you are as healthy as a bear."

"I have made you my executor and the guardian of my sister, Eleanor," continued Madison, putting his hand on his friend's arm.

St. Hilaire started. The young lady was fifteen, and at the time was taking a restricted

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view of life through the narrow windows of a convent school.

"I have no other heir but her, and she also has a fortune of a million francs in her own right. Raymond, my brother, the dearest wish of my heart——" and Madison finished the sentence with a pressure of St. Hilaire's hand.

"My dear Stanley, you will live for years. This depression of spirits is probably due to an over-indulgence in truffles and champagne. To-morrow you will be as well as ever."

"Who can tell?" replied Madison gravely. "Will you accept the trust?"

"My dear friend, any trust of yours I will accept and hold as sacred."

Contrary to what might be the expectation of any one assisting at this dialogue, Stanley Madison did not make away with himself immediately thereafter; nor was he called upon to quit the world until long after the episode was forgotten. He lived for some years, merrily and well, and might have continued to live many more had not an unfortunate pre-

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dilection for fast-racing automobiles ended tragically.

At the age of twenty-five, the Marquis de St. Hilaire found himself the sole executor of the Madison estate, and the guardian of a young lady of eighteen. To his horror the executor discovered that the light-hearted, open-handed, free-living Madison had not only spent his own fortune, but had made way with that of his sister. With a white, startled face young St. Hilaire looked across the table at Monsieur Gérin, his family lawyer, saying, with much feeling: "He was my dearly beloved friend, his honor is as sacred to me as my own. His name must remain untarnished. His memory must be kept unsullied. His sister must never know."

"Mademoiselle Madison is approaching marriageable age; already suitors for her hand are presenting themselves. What answer will you make when an accounting is demanded? How will you hide her brother's defalcation?" inquired the lawyer in his keen, analytical tone.

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St. Hilaire felt his cheek grow hot with shame. "Her brother's *misfortune* has a softer sound, Monsieur Gérin."

"You cannot hide it, my dear young friend, though you call it misfortune, accident, or by any soft name you choose."

St. Hilaire paced the floor with his young face drawn into deep lines of thought. Suddenly he threw the bundles of papers into the strong box and snapped the lock with an air of determination. "I will marry Mademoiselle Madison myself. My fortune is equal to that which she has lost. She shall have mine, and the husband of Eleanor Madison will make no demands upon the executor of my friend's estate."

"If she will have you," suggested the lawyer.

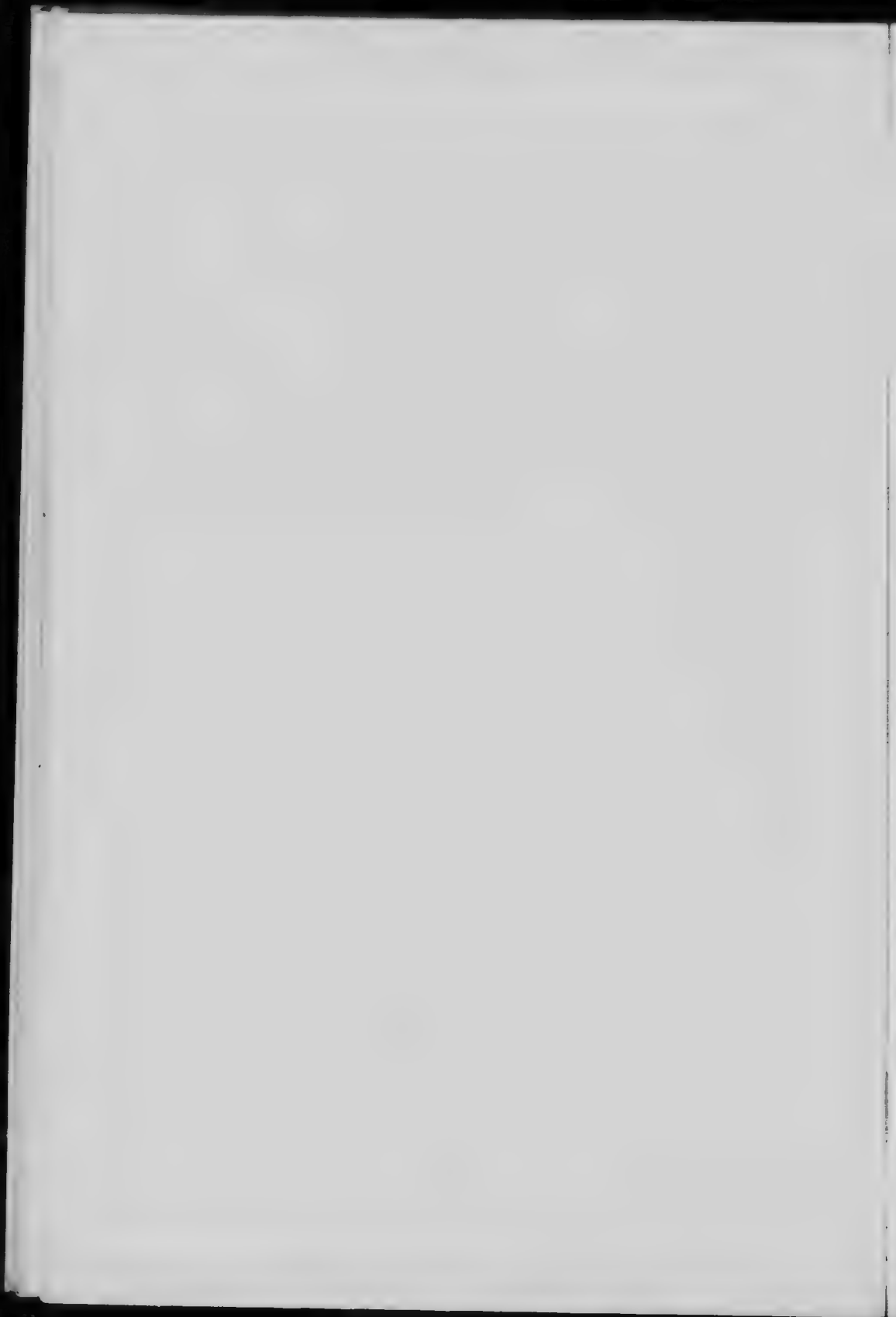
"She must have me," exclaimed St. Hilaire, "and it must be done at once. She is fresh from the convent; she can have seen few men. It is not likely—I say it entirely without vanity, Gérin—but it is not likely that she will look with indifference upon a Marquis de St. Hilaire."

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Jean François Raymond Bayard, Marquis de St. Hilaire, dressed in faultless style, and with his most polished air, waited upon the demoiselle Madison to make her the offer of his hand and fortune. As he stood in the salon awaiting her appearance, he rehearsed the phrases which he thought most suitable in a declaration to a girl of her tender and unsophisticated years. The light footstep of Miss Madison sounded in the corridor. She swept into the room. In spite of his outward appearance of sangfroid, St. Hilaire felt some slight inward trepidation as she came near. "Monsieur de St. Hilaire, how very good of you to come." She held out a cordial hand. St. Hilaire took the hand and looked in vain for the demure young creature fresh from the convent school, who would receive his declaration with downcast eyes, and a cheek suffused with blushes. Miss Madison was tall, and carried herself with the ease of a young woman accustomed to the world. Her mourning dress, the art of the most fashionable dress-maker, fitted her well-moulded form to per-



" You have recently left the convent "



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fection. Her eyes were deep blue, with long lashes, and she turned them upon St. Hilaire inquiringly.

"You have recently left the convent?" he began.

"Oh, ages ago—three months ago!" Her accent was perfect, and her manner instantly captivating. Any French nobleman would be proud of such a wife. St. Hilaire, feeling strangely diffident, asked lamely: "And were you not sorry to leave your school, the scene of so many old and endearing associations?"

Miss Eleanor raised her eyes with a smile. They were large, innocent eyes, but there was a light lurking in them, alluring, enticing, and bewitching, which disconcerted the young marquis. "It was dull beyond all words. I was inexpressibly bored," she replied, languidly. A pause followed. St. Hilaire had had no idea that the affair would prove so difficult. Miss Madison sighed as if the mere recollection of her school-days wearied her. St. Hilaire rose to his feet with an impulsive movement. She looked up into his face.

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"Mademoiselle Madison!" he exclaimed, his pulse beating rapidly; "Mademoiselle Madison, I beg of you to pardon the suddenness of my avowal, but circumstances render it imperative that if I speak upon this subject at all I should do so at once. I have the honor, mademoiselle, to propose for your hand in marriage."

"Monsieur de St. Hilaire, you overwhelm me! Why, you have seen me only these few minutes, since I was a child!"

"Mademoiselle, to see you for a moment is to love you," he declared, with increasing ardor. Miss Madison turned her head a little and smiled appreciatively. St. Hilaire took possession of her hand. "It was your brother's dearest wish." (At this juncture it was not difficult for St. Hilaire to speak tenderly.) "It is my own great desire to place my heart and fortune at your feet."

Eleanor Madison broke out into a merry laugh as she replied: "I suppose the customary method would be to refer you to my legal guardian."

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"In which case he says 'Yes,'" cried St. Hilaire. "He gives his unqualified consent, for the match is in every way suitable. Dear Eleanor, will you not set an early day?"

"Oh, Monsieur de St. Hilaire, not so fast. You are jesting. Surely you are not speaking seriously?"

"I am deeply in earnest, Mademoiselle Madison."

"Then I must say at once that I appreciate the honor, and I thank you for it, but I cannot marry you."

"Do not say that, mademoiselle. Why, an instant ago you led me to believe——"

"A moment ago I thought you were jesting," she replied quickly. "I have a merry heart and entered into the affair in the same spirit; but now that it is serious——"

"Wait a moment before you speak," implored St. Hilaire. "Stop and reconsider before you say definitely 'No!' Give me a little more time to plead my cause."

"But how *can* I reconsider when my heart already belongs to another?"

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"To another—already!" he stammered.
"May I ask to whom?"

"Certainly, as my guardian, it is your right to ask. Do you know Anatole Régal, the famous artist?"

"I know his work. It has some vogue, but it is not to my taste. The gentleman himself I do not know," replied the marquis.

"All Paris is wild about him," said the young girl. "I am going to marry him."

"Pray accept my congratulations," replied St. Hilaire stiffly. "You have made good progress since you left the convent."

"Oh, perhaps before!" she replied. Then with a tone of appeal: "You will not withhold your consent, will you, my guardian, just because you—because you happened to be refused?"

"Under the circumstances I cannot withhold my consent."

"But you are very angry with me? Her lip drooped, and she looked very sad.

"Ah, who could be angry with Eleanor Madison!" Taking her hand, he kissed her

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deliberately on each cheek, adding: "I claim this by right of my guardianship."

Her warm lips were provokingly near his. They were as pretty a pair of lips as ever tempted man. St. Anthony could not have resisted them without a struggle. St. Hilaire did not try. The young lady drew back from the ardor of his last salutation. "Is that by right of your guardianship?" she asked.

"That was consolation, my dear; and now *au revoir*. Your guardian wishes you every happiness in life." Bowing gracefully, St. Hilaire left her for his club.

"He is very, very charming," said Eleanor Madison to herself.

A year later "the prettiest American girl in Paris," Eleanor Madison, and the renowned artist, Anatole Régat, were married. Her young guardian mortgaged his own estates to furnish the lady's dowry, and the good name of Madison was safe in his keeping. One only knew of his sacrifice, that was his lawyer. Monsieur Gérin had known St. Hilaire from infancy and loved him devot-

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edly. His round, good-natured face became red with indignation, even while he obeyed the young man's mandate, and growlingly promised to keep the secret.

"You Don Quixote!" he declared angrily, "you have ruined yourself, and for what? For an ideal which never existed save in your own boyish brain. Your friend is dead and forgotten, while you have handed your fortune over to a silly, frivolous girl who will spend it with another man."

"*I* do not forget my friend, and his honor is my own," answered St. Hilaire.

"His honor—yes, if you will; but not his sins. You were not answerable for them. How about your own honor? How will you keep up the dignity of your name? What will an impoverished Marquis de St. Hilaire do in the salons of Paris? Are there not enough pauper noblemen in this Republican France of ours that you must go and add one more to the number? Go to America at once! Get you an heiress! Go sell your title in the open market! Marry the daughter of

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some rich American. Dip your hands deep into the father's coffers. Then return and live here like a gentleman!"

St. Hilaire flushed. "Pardieu, Monsieur Gérin, I will go to America, but not as a fortune-hunter. In that free land where labor is an honor, and wealth its reward, I will earn a fortune, and until then I will not return; until then I will be known as Mr. Jean Bayard."

CHAPTER II

WITH fifteen thousand dollars in his pocket, all that remained out of a once handsome fortune, St. Hilaire stood on the deck of a steamer sailing out of Southampton with her prow pointed toward the west. He had taken passage on an English steamer in the innocent belief that during the journey he might increase his vocabulary in the English tongue, which at the time went no further than: "Good morning, sir!" "How much?" "I do not understand!" and a few other phrases of an emphatic and exclamatory nature, with which he believed the American gentleman spiced his conversation.

He turned his eyes from the fast-receding, white cliffs of England, over the gray choppy water of the channel, toward France; his own France, which he could picture so green, so bright, so sunny, just a little way off on the other side of the mist and cold. The confusing babble of a foreign tongue jarred discor-

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dantly upon his ear, and he paced the deck as lonely and melancholy a figure as Napoleon on his way to exile.

Although St. Hilaire was homesick in every fibre of his being, no thought of turning back ever entered his mind. Through all the generations, the de St. Hilaires had persisted in a course, once taken, counting neither cost nor pains. It was a Count Raymond de St. Hilaire who founded the greatness of the house under the pennant of Godfrey de Bouillon at the time of the first crusade. It was a Marquis de St. Hilaire who lost his entire estate in one evening's play with a royal prince, and then rebuilt his fortunes in a day by eloping with the prince's daughter.

It was Jean Raphael de St. Hilaire who persisted in living in Paris throughout the reign of terror. His temerity nearly cost him his life, but fortune snatched him from under the very knife of the guillotine, and he lived to flourish during the Empire, and perpetuate his name through many generations, of which Jean François Raymond was the sole remain-

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ing representative. True to the spirit of his house St. Hilaire possessed the extravagant disregard for money, the almost Quixotic regard for honor, and the dauntless courage which had illuminated the careers of so many of his ancestors.

One afternoon, as he lay listlessly in a steamer-chair with half-closed eyes, a voice spoke to him in his native tongue. Like a flash he sprang to his feet, his eyes beaming, his face radiant. He could have fallen upon the neck of the speaker, and wept for joy to hear the dear familiar sound.

"No, I am not sea-sick," he replied; "a thousand thanks to you for inquiring, but I am fatigued with the sea; I am fatigued with hearing this eternal jargon of English of which I understand not one word. Ah, it is such a delight to hear one speak my language! Permit me to introduce myself. I am Jean Bayard, on my way to America for the first time, and it must be confessed suffering from nostalgia."

The gentleman who had addressed him was

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of agreeable appearance with light hair and a long moustache, which he stroked lovingly with a slim, white hand.

"I am Adolphe Zavanno returning to America for the tenth time."

"Then you are an American? No! Still you are not French, although you speak my language with such perfection."

"I was born in St. Petersburg," answered Adolphe Zavanno, with an accent which disowned the compliment. "My father came from Italy and my mother was Bavarian. I am a citizen of the world. I have lived many years in the States and know the country and its people well." And he gave an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, stroking his smooth moustache, and taking in every detail of St. Hilaire, nonchalantly, but with the nicest precision.

During the rest of the voyage Mr. Adolphe Zavanno unobtrusively sought the company of Mr. Jean Bayard. It was a great pleasure to the homesick Frenchman to have an opportunity to speak his own language,

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and he opened his heart to his new companion.

"I am going to America to earn a fortune," he said with sanguine earnestness.

"Ah," commented Zavanno; "in a day?"

"As soon as I can. I intend to invest in a western ranch."

"In what part of the West?" asked Zavanno, becoming more interested.

"I do not know as yet, somewhere out West," replied St. Hilaire vaguely.

"Have you ever had any experience in ranching, Mr. Bayard?" inquired Zavanno, lifting his eyebrows.

"No, but I can ride. I am a pretty good shot with the rifle. I can soon learn to throw the lasso. I shall soon become a typical 'va-chero.'"

The next day Adolphe Zavanno came to the side of the Frenchman as he was standing at the ship's rail.

"I have been thinking about that little business of yours and I believe I can be of material assistance to you."

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"What, are you familiar with the life of the plains?" exclaimed St. Hilaire in surprise.

"I have spent many years there. I know the plains of America as well as I know the cafés of Vienna. I can put you in touch with just the kind of a ranch you need."

"Where?" asked St. Hilaire all alive with interest.

"That depends upon the sum you want to invest; how much did you say it was?"

"Twenty thousand dollars."

"You intend to buy outright, no mortgage?"

"I wish to buy outright. I will pay with drafts on Wells, Fargo for fifteen thousand dollars."

A slight shade passed over Zavanno's face:

"Didn't you say twenty thousand?"

"Did I say twenty thousand?"

"I am sure you did. Don't you know how much you have to invest?"

"Yes, I remember now, it is fifteen thousand dollars."

The amount had been twenty thousand,

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but on the eve of his departure from Paris he had encountered a friend who was all on fire with a discovery he had made which would revolutionize the mining industry, and enrich beyond their wildest dreams of avarice those fortunate enough to advance the preliminary and necessary amount to take the infant invention from its cradle and set it upon its feet. This friend, a persuasive genius, with all the rosy hopefulness of his class, imbued St. Hilaire with optimism to the extent of twenty-five thousand francs, and went on his own way rejoicing.

Zavanno, who had been looking out over the sea, turned with a persuasive smile to say: "I am going out West myself. If you like, I'll give you a few days of my time. With my assistance you may be able to snap up a good bargain quietly before any one knows what you are after. What do you say?"

"You will go with me?" exclaimed St. Hilaire.

"Why yes, I can spare a few days, and shall enjoy the business immensely. Your lack of

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knowledge of the country and of the language would put you at the mercy of the first unscrupulous person who came along."

"Yes, yes, I must learn the language. I have not learned one word since I came on this ship. Let me see, I can say: 'Good morning, sir! How much it is? I do not understand' English, goddam!'"

Zavanno smiled quietly. "You have much to learn, Monsieur Bayard, but you are young, and have plenty of time to learn it in. You will find the study of the country, and the language, and the people, very interesting."

As the Marquis of St. Hilaire sailed into New York harbor he gave a cry of rapture. It was so beautiful after the tedious ocean voyage that he felt his heart go out to this new land.

"That grand Statue of Liberty was given by my dear France to these people," he said to himself with emotion; "and with thoughtful generosity they have put it here at the very gate of their country to bid the stranger welcome. It declares: 'Here all men are

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equal sovereigns in the land!' I, the Marquis de St. Hilaire, will become one of them. I will forget my rank. I will lay aside all of the Old-World prejudices. From now on I shall be one of the plainest of democrats, Mr. Jean Bayard."

A few hours later, the ever-watchful Zavanno saw Mr. Jean Bayard, the perspiration streaming down his face, his silk hat on the back of his bewildered head, standing on the dock amid the scattered contents of his trunks. Zavanno smiled as he heard the Frenchman's voice raised in argument with a custom-house official. "How much it is? I do not understand' English, goddam!"

CHAPTER III

ST. HILAIRE leaned back in the compartment of a Pullman vestibule train. Opposite him sat Mr. Adolphe Zavanno, his legs stretched out, his whole being pervaded with a sense of ease and personal satisfaction. By Zavanno's side was a Mr. Blaisdale, who, opportunely having a ranch for sale, had made himself one of the party at Jersey City.

Luncheon had just been disposed of; Zavanno's keen face was hidden behind the smoke of his cigar. Blaisdale, with a stubby pencil in his thick fingers, was busy writing figures on a pad. St. Hilaire looked out of the window in wonder at the endless plains. Hot, dry, red dust sifted through the double windows of the car. It got into his eyes and made them red; it irritated his nose and made him sneeze. "Mon cher Zavanno!" he cried, "your climate savors of the inferno. Is it always as hot as this in April?"

"I have seen the snow banked ten feet deep

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in these cuts and the wind blowing seventy miles an hour across these plains in this same month of the year," replied Zavanno.

"How much farther have we to go?"

"About thirty miles to Diamond."

"Only thirty miles more and our long journey is ended. Pray where are the cattle, and what do they feed upon?"

"You had better ask Blaisdale. He is a practical ranchman and can give you more information than I."

"You forget I do not speak his language," said St. Hilaire.

"A thousand pardons, Monsieur," replied Zavanno quickly; and repeated the question to Blaisdale.

"Tell your French friend that a few miles back from the railroad is one of the finest grazing countries in the world," and Blaisdale waved his hand comprehensively. "All we want out here is just a little more water to make this country a paradise."

"It is only twenty miles to my ranch," said Blaisdale as they dropped off the train at Dia-

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mond. "To-morrow morning early, if you two gents are agreeable, we'll ride over and take a look at it."

The town of Diamond, Wyoming, was a rough-set jewel of the plains. Its style of architecture was of the simplest, and had so far sought expression in the form of the saloon. Among the dozen or two of these thriving emporiums which lined both sides of the one street; the post-office, the express-office, and the jail hid themselves with coming modesty.

St. Hilaire accoutred according to a preconceived and original idea of the American cowboy, in a costume which he had planned with the costly assistance of a Parisian tailor, walked out to view the monuments of the town. These he found in the shape of a mountain of empty tin cans in the middle of the public square, and a lame coyote chained to a stake in front of a saloon.

Zavanno and Blaisdale, with their heads together over a table in the bar-room, watched the trim figure of the Frenchman in a fancy

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shooting-jacket, buff-colored breeches and a rakish sombrero, saunter complacently through the street with a camera under his arm and two large revolvers in his belt.

"I hope," said Blaisdale meditatively, "that Frenchy won't get killed before we've sold him the ranch."

St. Hilaire returned shortly with a mustang he had purchased from one of the citizens of Diamond. "He is not attractive to the eye, but he is a real cow pony," he explained.

"How much did you pay for that animal?" asked the interested Zavanno.

"One hundred dollars."

Zavanno looked aggrieved.

"Is it too much?" asked St. Hilaire.

"Twice too much," answered Zavanno, turning to speak to Blaisdale.

"Frenchy will be safe from ever getting shot out here. As long as he is such a good thing no one will kill him," laughed Blaisdale.

"Come!" cried St. Hilaire good-humoredly, "I see that your friend is laughing at my expense; let us dine at my expense also."

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The next morning the three men rode out to the ranch. Blaisdale had not exaggerated its merits. It was well watered, the buildings were in good repair, and the cattle feeding on the range were in prime condition. St. Hilaire was delighted at the prospect of becoming the owner of such a property.

"If you can close the bargain at the price of fifteen thousand dollars you will have made the investment of your life," said Zavanno quietly in his ear.

"I am sure of it," replied the Frenchman jubilantly. "Tell your friend Blaisdale, that if he is prepared to deliver me the title-deeds upon our return to the hotel, I shall be ready to pay him fifteen thousand dollars, cash down."

Two men, who seemed much at home on the ranch, accompanied them everywhere. St. Hilaire who had been regarding them with curiosity, finally inquired: "Who are they?"

"The large one with the black beard is called Pacific Pete, the other is Red-headed Hogan. They are fine men, both of them,

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and work for Blaisdale on the ranch. You can keep them in your employ if you wish."

St. Hilaire examined them critically. They stared at him and grinned. "They have the rough, easy manners of their class, and certainly do not seem to put themselves out for their patron," commented the Frenchman, as Pacific Pete rode in front of Blaisdale without offering an apology. "But they are fine types of manhood, and we shall doubtless get along famously together when I have become more familiar with their language and customs."

When the ranch had been critically inspected as to every detail, the three men rode back to the Wells Fargo office, where St. Hilaire turned his draft into crisp new bills.

"I think you will find this little satchel convenient to carry the money in," said Zavanno, handing him a small bag.

"And now," said the Frenchman gayly as he stuffed the money into it, "let us see what the cuisine of the hotel at Diamond will afford for dinner; after that, if Mr. Blaisdale has his

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title-deeds all prepared, we will talk business."

They went into the hotel, St. Hilaire carrying the precious bag, with Zavanno and Blaisdale keeping close on either side of him, for fear he might be robbed.

The "chef" of Murphy's Palace Hotel at Diamond had never been called upon to prepare so elaborate a menu as Zavanno insisted upon ordering. "We will make Blaisdale pay," he said with a wink.

"Take away those pints!" cried Blaisdale to the waiter. "Bring us our champagne in 'man-size' bottle."

"You are not drinking any wine, Mr. Bayard," remarked the solicitous Zavanno, refilling the glasses.

"Zavanno," said Blaisdale, "tell your French friend that it is a pleasure to know him and do business with him. Here's to him! I wish there were more like him!" and Blaisdale swallowed a big glass of champagne. "Get him to drink, Zavanno, can't you?"

"Say to the gentleman that I have the

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honor drink his health," replied St. Hilaire in response, touching his glass to his lips.

When the coffee was served in the large, thick cups, the best china of the Diamond hostlery, St. Hilaire put his hand on the opulent little satchel, which during all this time had been by his side upon a chair next to the wall. "Now, Messieurs," he exclaimed, "let Mr. Blaisdale bring out and deliver to me the necessary papers, and the affair can be quickly settled!"

At a nod from Zavanno, Blaisdale went up to his room. "He has gone to get them," explained Zavanno. St. Hilaire lit a cigarette.

"You have a good business head on your shoulders, Mr. Bayard," commented Zavanno.

"I know very little about commercial affairs," replied St. Hilaire, leisurely blowing smoke up in the air, "but I feel sure that if that ranch can be purchased for fifteen thousand dollars I am making no mistake in buying it."

Blaisdale returned with a look of annoyance on his face, "I have been so stupid as to

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leave all the papers out at the ranch," he exclaimed.

Zavanno turned with a shrug to explain the situation to St. Hilaire.

"In that case there is nothing to do to-night. It is perhaps just as well, for I am becoming rather sleepy. Let us say then to-morrow," said St. Hilaire, taking up his satchel.

"I will tell you what we can do, we can all ride over to the ranch to-morrow morning, the business can be done there just as well as here," suggested Zavanno.

"Oh, by the way," said St. Hilaire, "are there not some formalities to be gone through with at the Land Office? Mr. Blaisdale,"—here he inclined politely toward that gentleman who was listening intently,—“is of course a man of high standing, but I have been told that one must be very sure of his title in this rough country.”

"Certainly, certainly," acquiesced Zavanno quickly, "there must be no flaw in the title. I shall see to it myself that you are absolutely

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secured before you pay over one cent. How does this plan strike you? The county seat is at Sandy Gulch. We can go out to the ranch first and then ride over to the clerk's office."

"That will be perfectly agreeable to me," acquiesced St. Hilaire.

"I can't follow what you two are talking about, but I leave everything to you. I am in the hands of my friends," interposed Blaisdale with a laugh.

"That's all right old man," said Zavanno, laying his hand on Blaisdale's arm. Then turning to St. Hilaire, he added: "You can carry the cash with you; I think it will be safe. We shall all go heavily armed."

"The fear of being robbed has never once entered my head," was the reply. "It may be over-confidence on my part, but I have always felt that I could shoot as quickly and as straight as most of the men out here. Gentlemen, I bid you good-night."

CHAPTER IV

ST. HILAIRE slept late into the morning, and when he did awake it was with a slight headache and a sense of having slept too long.

"This Diamond champagne is not fit for gentlemen," he thought; "yet I hardly touched it."

Taking the little black bag from between the mattresses, where he had placed it for safety upon retiring, he opened it mechanically and took a reassuring look at the package of bills. Going downstairs he was chagrined to find that the sun was high in the heavens, and that neither Zavanno nor Blaisdale was visible. He breakfasted, and after waiting impatiently about the office came to the conclusion that the pair had gone out to the ranch to await him there, so he had his small and vicious mustang brought around, and set out to follow them. The ride across the plains in the fresh morning air soon dispelled the last fumes of the bad wine, and he whistled blithely.

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When he entered the ranch-house he found the two cowboys seated at the table, smoking their after-dinner pipes. They looked up, and grunted with surprise at the sight of the Frenchman. "Mistaire Zavanno, Mistaire Blaisdale?" he said inquiringly.

"Damned if I know where they are, Frenchy," replied Pacific Pete.

"Damfino, damfino?" repeated St. Hilaire in his soft voice, "I do not understan'."

Taking the only vacant chair, he sat down to await the arrival of Zavanno and Blaisdale.

"What does the Frenchman want anyhow?" asked the red-haired cowboy.

"He wants those smooth chaps who came out here with him yesterday to look at the ranch. Yer pards haven't been around here this morning, Frenchy, and what's more I don't look for them again neither."

"I do not understan' English," replied St. Hilaire.

Pacific Pete, whose sobriquet was derived from a long residence upon the western slope rather than from any marked docility of dis-

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position, scowled. "These foreign cusses make me tired," he grunted, putting his feet upon the table, and to emphasize his *ennui* he spat over his shoulder.

The uncleaned boots were more than reminiscent of the corral, and either through inadvertence or design Pacific Pete had put them rather close under the visitor's nose. St. Hilaire with a quick blow sent the boots from the table and Pacific Pete to the floor. The cowboy sprang erect with a volley of profanity, while his hand flew to his belt.

"*Vous êtes bien impertinent, Monsieur Pacific Pete,*" said St. Hilaire, eyeing him coolly.

"You get out of here before lightning strikes you," cried Pete, pointing to the door and touching his revolver significantly.

St. Hilaire understood no word, but the gesture was unmistakable. "*Cette ranch sera bientôt la mienne; je vais l'acheter de Monsieur Blaisdale,*" he replied firmly.

"What does he say about Blaisdale?" asked the red-headed cowboy from his corner.

"Give it up, but I'm going to chuck him

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out," replied the pacific one. "Come, Frenchy, get a move on you," and he reached out a huge hand toward St. Hilaire.

Pacific Pete's hand was black with hair like the paw of a bear. And it felt like a bear's paw as it fell upon St. Hilaire's shoulder. With an expression of extreme disgust, St. Hilaire shook himself free from the grasp, and Pacific Pete was sent reeling against the wall from a blow on the chest.

As soon as the big cowboy could fill his lungs with air he expelled it in a storm of profanity calculated to make a timid heart quake with fear. St. Hilaire faced him bravely. There was a bright light in his eyes and a look of determination on his mouth. He did not know why he had been attacked. He saw a black-fisted, black-faced giant who had insulted him, and, who was now contemplating further aggression. In size this ruffian towered head and shoulders above him, but St. Hilaire had a spirit much larger than his body, and stood ready to defend himself valiantly.

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With a final bellow Pacific Pete charged like one of his own bulls.

To the intense delight of Red-headed Hogan there followed as pretty a rough-and-tumble fight as it had ever been his luck to witness. At the end of two minutes the table had been overturned, the entire stock of crockery wrecked, and a chair broken. When the two men separated and stood breathing heavily, the bright Norman blood was running freely from St. Hilaire's nose, staining his handsome suit; while Pacific Pete felt his respect for *Frenchy* increasing as rapidly as the lump forming on his own forehead.

"I reckon we'll have to call it a draw, Pete, time's up," chuckled the red-headed cowboy.

Thus goaded, Pacific Pete lunged forward, and paying no heed to a stinging blow in the eye, caught St. Hilaire around the waist, and despite his valiant struggles dragged him to the door and threw him out with all his mighty strength. St. Hilaire fell face downward in the dust, where he lay faint and bleeding. Pacific Pete closed the door and coming back,

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righted the table, propped the broken chair against the wall, and sitting down replaced his boots in their former elevated position.

Red-headed Hogan studied Pacific Pete's countenance.

"He's a good one," remarked Pete reflectively as he wiped his face. "He made a good fight, and he seemed reluctant to go, but I reckon now he's gone, he'll rest quiet for a while and won't hurry back."

The door opened and St. Hilaire entered.

Pacific Pete sprang to his feet; all traces of anger vanished from his face. "Now look here, young fellow, I don't want to kill you. Haven't you got enough?"

His manner was of the mildest and he spoke pleadingly, as if he had been worsted in the encounter. St. Hilaire hesitated, then his hand sought the inside pocket of his coat. Like a flash Pacific Pete had him covered with his revolver.

"None of that, Frenchy, I've got the drop on you," but with a laugh he lowered his weapon when he saw nothing more formid-

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able in the Frenchman's hand than a little green book. It was a small pocket dictionary of English and French.

"*Attendez un moment,*" said St. Hilaire with calm politeness, and he sat down to the table with the book before him. The ranchmen crowded close, and looked over his shoulder. With a lead pencil in his hand, St. Hilaire turned the leaves of the dictionary and slowly wrote:

"This ranch, he be to me when I buy him Blaisdale 15,000 dollar; then you go. Is it not?"

He then handed the pencil and paper to Pacific Pete with a bow. Pete scrawled in large letters across the paper:

"This is Our Ranch. if Blaisdale tries to get Fifteen Thousand from you he's nothin' but a damn thief. Yours Truly, Pacific Pete."

Laboriously, St. Hilaire sought out the meaning of each word in the dictionary. Red-headed Hogan went to a chest and taking out some title-deeds spread them before him. St.

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Hilaire sat with knitted brows. Taking up the black bag he opened it and took out the money.

"Lemme see!" said Pacific Pete taking the money from his hand unceremoniously, and stripping off the outside bills, showed a neat package of brown paper.

"A gold-brick, By Thunder!" he guffawed; but there was a ring of sympathy in his rough voice the next moment as he added: "It's real hard luck, sonny."

Red-headed Hogan watched the changing expressions on St. Hilaire's face in silence.

St. Hilaire rose to his feet and walked to the door. He gave one sweeping look over the broad domain studded with feeding cattle, then turning toward the two ranchmen without betraying the slightest outward emotion, he made them a graceful bow, saying: "*Pardon, Messieurs*. Good-morning, sirs, god-dam!" and walking from the house, leaped into the saddle and rode away.

"Pete," said the red-headed cowboy, as the two walked off toward the corral, "I shouldn't

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care to be in the shoes of Blaisdale or his pard if Frenchy gets his hands on either of them."

"He's a dead game little sport," replied Pacific Pete.

The dust blew into St. Hilaire's face. It parched his mouth, it stung his eyes; it choked him. As he wiped the gritty dirt from his dry lips he thought lovingly of a little table at the Café de la Régence, with the ice clinking in a tall glass before him, and the hum of Parisian voices in his ears. "Ah," he sighed, "I would give ten thousand francs for one cool, deep drink, and the sound of that dear French language. Ten thousand francs! Ah, I must find that Zavanno."

At the hotel he sold his horse and his entire outfit with the exception of a few necessary articles, and changing his damaged clothes he set out with a small valise in his hand, and some money in his pocket, to walk over to the railroad station.

"I have added somewhat to my English vocabulary," he thought as he repeated aloud,

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"Damtief," "Goldbrique." "Ah, I will find Zavanno and Blaisdale."

"Tick-ket," he said, taking out a roll of bills and placing them upon the ledge of the station agent's window.

"No trains running either way since yesterday. Washout east of here. Traffic won't be resumed until to-night," said the railroad man without looking up from the clicking instrument.

"Plait-il. Vash-hout, hein?"

"Accident down the line to the west-bound Overland."

"Accident? Ah, oui." St. Hilaire understood that some mishap had interrupted travel and he decided to walk down the railroad track until he should come to a point where he could get a train. But what he did not know was that the east-bound express had not gotten through that morning, and that a couple of anxious scoundrels were not many miles away.

CHAPTER V

ST. HILAIRE passed a gang of Italian laborers, who, stimulated at their task by an Irish foreman, were working like ants to repair the ravages of the flood. The water had torn a hole in the roadbed large enough to swallow up a section house. St. Hilaire peered into it curiously. "Ah, vash-hout," he commented, and continued steadily down the track mile after mile.

He saw nothing but sand, with thin, colorless grass, and far away to the left a range of snow-capped mountains, and before him two steel rails that went on and on toward the horizon, trying to meet, but never quite succeeding. The sun declined; the gray sand became a purplish red; the steel rails became purple; and the white mountains were crested with crimson. The air seemed alive with color.

No living thing was seen or heard. It was absolute solitude, and absolute silence save

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for the ceaseless hum, hum of electricity in the wires overhead.

The sun went out; night descended, and a long bank of purple clouds suddenly turned black. The wind blew cold from the snow mountains.

At the end of another mile he came upon a water-tank, and a long, dark line of freight cars on a siding. A large drop of rain struck his hand. He looked up at the threatening cloud. "Vash-hout," he said, and looking about for a place of shelter, climbed into an empty freight car. He stood leaning against the side of the car, looking out through the door into the blackness of the night. The heavens seemed to open on the instant, and the rain came down in floods. "It is well to be under cover from such a storm," thought St. Hilaire.

A board creaked at one end of the car. St. Hilaire suddenly turned his head. It was pitch dark within, but as his eyes became somewhat accustomed to the darkness he thought he could distinguish the figure of a man in a corner.

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"Another voyager who has taken refuge from the storm," thought he, and spoke out in his pleasant voice, "Good morning, sir. *Vashout*, yes?"

There was no reply. If it was a man he did not understand the English of St. Hilaire. If it was a wild creature of the plains which had taken refuge from the storm St. Hilaire's soft tones failed to reassure it.

He thought he saw it begin to move, very slowly, almost imperceptibly, not in his direction, but toward the door. If it was a man he was crouching low, if an animal it stood high from the ground.

It gave a sudden leap forward, but not quick enough to escape the grasp of St. Hilaire.

There was a sharp struggle. Uttering no sound beyond his quick breathing, the man resisted desperately. He turned and twisted in his attempt to slide out of the open door.

St. Hilaire held him powerless and drew him close until he could see the outlines of his face, his long moustache and the gleam in his eyes.

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"Zavanno," he said quietly, "I want my money."

There was no answer.

"Zavanno," he repeated in the same quiet tone. "You shall not leave this car until you restore to me the money you have stolen."

"I have it not."

"Do not lie to me," and he pressed Zavanno against the side of the car.

"I swear to you I have it not," he panted; "you may kill me, but that will not get you back your money, for Blaisdale has it all."

"I do not believe you. It was you who planned the villany," said St. Hilaire, holding him off at arm's length. Blaisdale, who had been standing rigid in the farthest corner, hoping to glide unobserved out of the door, now saw his opportunity to leap upon St. Hilaire from behind and garrote him. At the same instant Zavanno struck his feet out from under him, and the three men rolled in a heap upon the floor of the car. The two tied the Frenchman's hands and feet, and gagged him. Not until it was done did either



"Zavanno," he said quietly "I want my money."

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speak. Then Zavanno in English: "Search him, Blaisdale."

Blaisdale did as he was bid.

"What do you find?"

"A revolver."

"Take it."

"A roll of bills."

"Good; we can always use money."

"It seems hard to take the poor devil's last cent, Zavanno," said Blaisdale, a slight feeling of compunction coming over him.

"Take the cash, you fool, don't you understand that without money he is helpless and cannot follow us," and Zavanno snatched the money from Blaisdale's hesitating hand, and slipped it hastily into the inside pocket of his coat. As he did so, something white fluttered from his pocket to the floor of the car. In his haste he did not see it. Blaisdale, his eyes turned toward the door, also failed to see it; and he also failed to discover the heavy gold watch in St. Hilaire's fob, or the ring upon his finger, for at that moment the whistle of an approaching train was heard.

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"Quick, Zavanno!" exclaimed Blaisdale, catching his companion by the arm, "the track's repaired; the east-bound overland is coming!" and the two men leaped from the car out into the storm, closing the door hastily. An hour after they had left, the train began to move; slowly at first, with a jerk, then with a rattle and jar. St. Hilaire, lying helpless on the floor, was rolled from side to side; tossed up and down this way and that until every bone and nerve in his body cried out with pain.

He tried to work his hands free from his bonds, but a sudden faintness came over him, and he had to give up the attempt. Frequently the train stopped, and then there was a respite. He was not aware that he slept, though sometimes he seemed to lose consciousness for a moment, but he was never free from pain.

He lost all count of time. For all he knew he had lain thus hours or days. He felt a burning and increasing thirst, and seemed desirous of living only until he could satisfy it.

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At last, when he had given up all thought of ever seeing day, the door slid gently open. He turned his face toward it, and in the gray light of dawn saw a boy clamber into the car.

The boy started back with some alarm at the sight of the strange traveller.

St. Hilaire rolled over on his face, showing the boy that his hands were tied behind him.

"Hully gee!" said the boy, and taking out a jackknife, cut his bonds. St. Hilaire tried to get upon his feet, but fell back helpless.

"*De l'eau,*" he whispered.

"What's your name," inquired the boy.

"*De l'eau, pour l'amour de Dieu,*" pleaded St. Hilaire, opening his lips and putting out his parched tongue.

The boy understood the appeal, and putting his hand into a small basket which he carried slung on his back, drew out a bottle.

"Here, take a pull at this."

St. Hilaire seized the bottle, put it greedily to his lips, and drank and drank.

"Say, for a sick man you've got the suction of a two-inch hose. Cheese it, cully, that cold

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tea's got to last me all day," he cried in alarm, rescuing the bottle.

St. Hilaire began to feel restored. He smiled at the boy, and said with his soft accent: "*Merci beaucoup.*"

The boy sat down on the floor and with his knees drawn up to his chin looked with curiosity at St. Hilaire, who returned the gaze.

He was a boy of about sixteen, with a broad, freckled face, a flat nose, and tow hair which stood up straight from his forehead.

"He's a nob!" said the boy; "get on to his clothes. Say, mister, what are you beatin' your way for? Why ain't you ridin' in the Pullman?"

"Mistaire Pullman?" inquired St. Hilaire, politely pointing to the boy.

"Naw, my name's Billy Johnson; I said, why ain't you travelling with the other nobs in first-class style?"

"Billie Jonsen?" repeated St. Hilaire, picking up the envelope which had fallen from Zavanno's pocket.

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"Yes, that's my name, William Johnson, called Billy."

"Ah, Guillaume Jonsen Call-Billie, bon." St. Hilaire smiled and tapping his own breast said: "Jean Bayard."

There was another pause. The man and the boy again studied the situation, each seeking a channel of communication. The boy tried once more. Raising his voice and speaking in sharp, disjointed phrases: "This-empty-car-going-Cheyenne," touching the car as he spoke. "I-go-Cheyenne-for a job."

St. Hilaire followed every motion with quick, animated eyes. He face lit up as he said: "Cheyenne? *une ville?* Yes, I understand." Examining the contents of the envelope, which he held in his hand, he found it to be a letter addressed to Zavanno at Chicago; turning to his companion he said: "Bayard-go-Chic-a-go."

Johnson whistled, "Say, do you know how far Chicago is?" He took out of his basket three biscuits, and placing them upon the floor, pointed to them in turn. "Here's Chey-

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enne, there's Omaha, and this one, *way* off here is Chicago."

St. Hilaire nodded: "Yes, dis go Chic-a-go."

"Why ain't you travelling in a palace-car?" asked the boy once more.

"Palace? Ah, yes, I understan'," and St. Hilaire turned out an empty pocket in answer.

"Broke!" said Billy Johnson sympathetically, handing him a biscuit from his basket. St. Hilaire took the bread and bit into hungrily, then taking a handsome watch from his pocket, said: "Dis Cheyenne."

"You want to spout that in Cheyenne?"

"Comment?"

"Do you want to hock that watch in Cheyenne? Put it up at your uncle's? See here!" and he brought the three round biscuits on the floor, together into a graphic cluster.

"*Oncle? Chez mon oncle?* Ha, ha, yes," laughed St. Hilaire. "*Mont de Piété.*"

Billy Johnson generously shared some sandwiches with St. Hilaire, who accepted them

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with eagerness, for he was half-famished. Then they took turns sleeping and watching, to guard against trainmen and tramps Johnson tried to explain. Thus the journey to Cheyenne was accomplished, and there Billy Johnson piloted his companion to a pawnshop. The emerald on St. Hilaire's finger attracted the pawnbroker's eye at once, but the Frenchman refused absolutely to entertain any offers for it, and parted with his watch only. This transaction finished, St. Hilaire held a ten-dollar note out to the boy.

Johnson's freckled face turned red. "Naw, I ain't earned it. I'm no beat. My dad pays his way," he said, putting his hands behind him, for the temptation was great.

"*Vous êtes un brave garçon, tenez,*" and St. Hilaire persisted.

"Aw, put up your dough; I reckon that's how you come to have so little of it, you are so durn free with it," and young Johnson pushed the hand away almost rudely. "Come, let's go feed our faces. You can blow me to that if you want to," and he escorted the

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Frenchman out in search of a place to dine.

Here St. Hilaire took the lead, and going into a restaurant where there were soft carpets, mirrors, and snowy tablecloths, gave Billy the best dinner he had ever dreamed of. "Hully Gee!" thought Johnson, replete with tenderloins and ice cream, "no wonder he goes broke, if that's the way he spends his dough."

They walked to the station. The sturdy, self-reliant Billy Johnson with his hat on the back of his head, and hands in pockets, whistling. St. Hilaire holding his valise tightly, and with his purse at the bottom of an inner pocket.

The train stood puffing at the station, and their leave-taking, like their first introduction, was abrupt. St. Hilaire threw his arms about Billy, pressed him warmly to his heart, and kissed him affectionately upon each of his freckled cheeks.

Billy, taken completely by surprise, gave a gasp, then broke away from the embrace with

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a red face. "Say, quit yer kiddin', I ain't a girl."

St. Hilaire continued to hold the young fellow's hand, and looked earnestly into the honest blue eyes, saying with emotion: "*Guillaume Jonsen Call-Billie, vous êtes un brave homme.*" The warning whistle sounded, and he jumped on to the steps of the moving train.

Johnson waved his hand: "You're all right, Bay-yard, you're white—may you strike good luck."

The Overland Limited pulled out of the depot with the Marquis de St. Hilaire travelling "like a nob" in the Pullman car. On the way he quietly studied a small phrase-book of the troublesome English tongue.

CHAPTER VI

IN a street a shade dirtier than its neighbors, where the coal smoke seemed a shade darker and the houses a little more dingy, was a small, unsavory-lookin' hotel of uncertain reputation. It was to this hotel that Adolphe Zavanno's letter had been addressed. It was at this hotel that the fastidious St. Hilaire took up his abode. In answer to his soft inquiry with the gentle rising reflection, "Mistaire Zavanno? Mistaire Adolphe Zavanno?" The fat, coarse-featured proprietor who sat in the obscure little office, had replied tersely, "He is not here."

"No?" replied St. Hilaire in a tone of disappointment. "Rose?"

The man looked up into his face and answered shortly: "I don't know who you mean."

With his same unruffled, affable manner St. Hilaire slipped a sum of money into the hand of the hotel-keeper and repeated: "Rose?"

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A look of intelligence came over the fat face, and the small eyes above the puffy cheeks blinked. "Do you mean Rose Goudet?"

St. Hilaire hazarded an affirmative gesture, "Yes."

"I have not seen her. She is sick."

St. Hilaire, who had picked up a few more words of English, managed to make out the substance of the hotel-keeper's reply.

"*Seek? Where?*" he asked with quiet persistence.

The hotel-keeper wrote an address on a slip of paper. St. Hilaire took it with a bow of thanks and went out in search of Rose.

He picked his way through a side street noisy with swarming children, and climbed several flights of dark stairs, knocking at different doors until at last he found Rose Goudet's apartment of one room. It was a little cleaner than any of the others into which he had looked. There was a sprig of red geranium in a flower-pot on the window-sill, and a kitten lay curled up on a well-worn mat at the foot of the lounge. Rose Goudet had evi-

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dently risen quickly at the knock, and stood in the middle of the room with a look of expectancy in her eyes. They were large, dark eyes that shone with unusual brightness.

But it was as if she had hoped against hope for the entrance of some one she ardently wished to see, for at the first sight of St. Hilaire the light fled from her face and she said querulously, "Well, what is it?"

The accent was unmistakably French.

"Do not disturb yourself in the least, Mademoiselle. You have been ill; I pray you will continue to recline," said St. Hilaire in a tone of solicitude.

The gentleness of his manner and the soft Parisian accent touched her at once, for a faint smile came to her lips and she sank back upon the couch, and, leaning her head upon her arm, waited for him to speak.

"France is far from here, Mademoiselle," he began.

A sudden animation flashed in her eyes, to be followed by a shade of sadness. "Alas, yes, and it is many years since I have seen it."

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She turned away her head and looked at the one sprig of geranium in the flower-pot on the window-sill, and at the wet clothes flapping on a line outside in the narrow court.

St. Hilaire looked at her closely and saw that the thinness of her face came from recent illness. Its outlines were by nature round and comely, and under favorable circumstances, with color in her cheeks, she would be pretty.

"It is very different from this strange country," he continued.

She smiled, but only for an instant. Then she shook her head.

"Monsieur, you did not climb these long stairs to tell me that?"

St. Hilaire fixed his clear eyes upon the girl's face and asked abruptly:

"Mademoiselle Goudet, where is Adolphe Zavanno?"

He was prepared for some show of surprise on the part of the woman, but the manner in which she received his short, sharp question startled him.

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She turned as white as the pillow under her arm. St. Hilaire thought she was about to faint and sprang forward. She put one hand upon his arm and whispered:

"Where did you see him? Have you any message for me?"

"You have seen him since I have, Mademoiselle. No, I have no message for you."

The girl threw herself face down on the pillow and began to sob violently. St. Hilaire waited for the paroxysm to pass and then asked:

"You have seen him, have you not, Mademoiselle?"

"No," she said disconsolately; "no."

St. Hilaire started with dismay; he felt that the woman told the truth.

"He was to come for me, but he has not come. I know what he has done, he has gone to New York without me. He has forgotten me."

She was crying softly, as if it relieved her heart to confide even in him, a stranger. Sud-

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denly she raised her face, wet with tears, and looking at him with suspicion asked:

"What do you want with him?"

St. Hilaire returned her gaze steadily. "He robbed me of all my money, and I must find him," he answered simply.

"Oh, mon Dieu!" she burst forth. Then recovering herself with an effort. "I cannot tell you where he has gone."

"You know where he might be reached. You can give me perhaps a clew."

"No, Monsieur, no!"

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle, I think you can."

"Oh, I cannot betray him, I cannot. You must not ask. I am sorry you were robbed, Monsieur. Oh, it is terrible, but I can say nothing. Do not ask me."

"But I must know, Mademoiselle. You have no reason to like this Zavanno. I beg of you to tell me something that will aid me to find him."

"I have no reason to like him," she sighed.
"Ah, Monsieur, who can understand the

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heart? He has left me here. I am ill. I am poor. Yes, he has deserted me. I fear he has deserted me, but I cannot betray him, I cannot."

"Mademoiselle Goudet, he is a villain. He has robbed me. He has deserted you."

"Still he may come back—he may," she said pleadingly.

St. Hilaire looked at her with a slight smile of incredulity, yet with the light of sympathy in his eyes. The wail of an infant came from a corner of the room where, unnoticed by him, a cradle was screened by a petticoat thrown over a chair.

Rose Goudet walked softly to the corner, and taking up the squirming atom hushed it gently.

"He may come back," she repeated, looking tenderly into the wrinkled little red face. "If not, we will go to him."

St. Hilaire rose abruptly to his feet and gave a glance around the meanly furnished room.

"You are in need of money, Mademoi-

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selle Goudet?" he said with some hesitation.

"I shall be put out on the street soon because I cannot pay," and she held the babe closer to her breast.

"And after that?"

"After that—who knows?" and she threw her head back defiantly.

St. Hilaire took out his pocketbook.

"Stop, Monsieur!" she exclaimed fiercely. "I am sorry for you that you have lost your money. My heart pains me for you. But if I were going to tell you, I would *tell* you, I would not sell him. He is perhaps a bad man, but I will not sell him."

"You misunderstand me, Mademoiselle Goudet; it was to aid you and the little one that I offered money. I do not seek to profit by your necessity," and St. Hilaire walked up and down the room with a nervous stride.

Rose Goudet sat down upon the threadbare sofa, and putting her flushed cheek close to that of the now sleeping baby, said in a low voice:

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"I thank you, Monsieur. I do not wish to appear ungrateful, but I can take no money from you."

St. Hilaire walked to the window and looked out upon the squalid scene. The woman sat motionless, looking fixedly at the floor. Stealthily he slipped a sum of money under the edge of the flower-pot, and then turning said to her gently:

"Mademoiselle, I bid you good-evening."

"One moment, Monsieur," she said, rousing herself with some show of interest. "You are alone, Monsieur, it is to caution you. The neighborhood is not of the safest."

St. Hilaire laughed lightly.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle, I have discovered that in this country one must always be prepared. Adieu," and he hurried down into the street.

He had gone but a few paces when a man in a rusty coat with an unprepossessing face, and linen far from spotless, approached him quickly. When at his elbow he dropped a dirty hand into the greasy, black bag he car-

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ried, and whispered insinuatingly: "Say, boss, won't you buy a cake of soap. Only a dime."

St. Hilaire drew back.

"I understand. Goldbrique!" he cried angrily, and knocking the itinerant soap merchant into the gutter he walked rapidly off to his hotel.

That night in his room he packed his few belongings.

"Zavanno has gone to New York. I will seek him there," he said.

As he counted over the money in his purse he found he had given more than half of it to Rose Goudet. "That is the worst of this poverty," he exclaimed; "one is continually forgetting one is no longer rich."

CHAPTER VII

RAYMOND DE ST. HILAIRE had little money left in his purse, so little that it would not buy a ticket to New York.

"This is awkward," he exclaimed, "I can ride as long as my funds permit and then I must go on foot."

"Is it distan' Neuve York?" he asked, getting down from the train when his ticket was exhausted.

"Three hundred miles."

"Tree 'undred mile! Good-morning, sir," and he set out at a rapid gait.

With unusual foresight he had laid aside a small sum of money, just enough to buy bread and a few cakes of chocolate. Upon this he could live, and neither beg nor starve.

They were very long, those three hundred miles, and the road was often very heavy. His shoes became thin at the sole, and his clothes were worn and soiled, but St. Hilaire's heart never once quailed.



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" Oh, le bel enfant "

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Had not his ancestor Raphael de St. Hilaire made the retreat from Moscow with Napoleon's shattered army, walking with frozen feet over the blood-stained snow? And should Raymond de St. Hilaire give in at three hundred miles!

On a bright May day with the fragrant air vibrating with life, St. Hilaire entered a New Jersey town. The neatly trimmed hedges, the well-kept lawns, the well-built houses with their pleasant gardens, reminded him of the homes of his own sunny France, and his heart stirred within him.

At the foot of one of the finest gardens, under a tree near the roadside, was a little girl playing with a doll. She was a pretty little creature in a green and white frock—a dainty bit of color which blended with the tender green of the new leaves and grass.

"*Oh, le bel enfant!*" exclaimed St. Hilaire, and stopped to admire. The child had her little cups and saucers set out upon her doll's table, and apple blossoms on the plates for food. In her arms she held a flaxen-haired

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doll to which she was talking in a soft monotone. All by herself the child was having a beautiful time, unconscious of the presence of lookers-on from the world outside. But there were two. In the road stood the delighted St. Hilaire, and behind him with one ear cocked, deeply interested in proceedings which suggested food, was a yellow dog.

"Come to tea, you dear Flossie Grey," said the child lovingly, smoothing out the doll's dress and putting her in her chair up to the table.

The yellow cur, apparently mistaking this invitation, gave a bark of assent, dashed forward, fixed his teeth in Flossie Grey's waist, and made off through the orchard.

A mother at the sight of her first-born being carried off into the forest by a lion could not have given a more heart-rending cry than came from the little girl as she saw Flossie disappearing among the trees of the orchard, her pink sash trailing on the ground.

"Oh, my dolly, he'll kill my darling dolly!" and with tears of anguish rolling down her

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cheeks she ran after the dog as fast as her small legs could carry her. St. Hilaire, deeply moved by the tragedy, leaped the fence and bounded after the ravisher. Up one row of trees ran the dog—St. Hilaire followed. Down another row, doubling quickly behind the trunk of a large apple tree, through a patch of strawberry plants, deaf to soft words spoken coaxingly or imprecations hurled at him in emphatic French, in an ecstasy of delight with the game, the puppy ran, St. Hilaire still following, and the bereft little mother bringing up the rear.

By and by, at a safe distance, the cur rested on his fore-paws, his red tongue hanging out, inviting further pursuit. He had played the trick before. This time St. Hilaire came up very slowly and cautiously until quite near, then raising his arm he let fly a stone.

"Brute, prends-ça."

There was a crash of glass in the conservatory, and the puppy, with a bark, ran wildly toward the road. The perspiring St. Hilaire followed gamely. A stray cat crossed the

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dog's path. He dropped Flossie Grey in the dust and made excitedly for the newer prey.

St. Hilaire picked up the doll, brushed off the dirt, and went back to restore it to the child. She received it with open arms. "Is she hurt? Is she hurt?" she cried, her little bosom heaving with anxiety.

St. Hilaire laughed. "*Oh le bel enfant !*"

The little girl was making a careful examination of Flossie Grey's underclothing. "I don't think she's hurt, unless she's injured 'ternally," she said. Holding her restored baby close to her heart she turned a tear-stained but radiant face up to St. Hilaire.

"Oh, I love you; you have saved my darling dolly!"

"I lov' you," repeated St. Hilaire, bending down.

The child was not afraid of the stranger. She did not see the worn-out shoes and dusty clothing. She saw only the gentle expression in the eyes, and putting her arm around his neck she kissed him.

Since he had been in this new land these

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were the first words of affection that had been given him, and his aching, hungry heart seized upon them greedily. He caught up the pretty creature and held her close against his breast for a moment, and when he set her down upon her feet they both laughed gayly. But there was a catch in St. Hilaire's laugh and a glisten in his eyes as he said: "*Adieu ! Bel enfant !*" and left her under the apple tree with her dishes and her doll.

St. Hilaire, with the child's kiss warm upon his lips, felt his heart soften toward the new world which had so far treated him but coldly. As he walked the highway he looked around, and felt that there was beauty here, and goodness and love just as there was in France. St. Hilaire seated himself under a tree by the roadside and began eating his breakfast of bread, when the town constable passed by. He was stout and ruddy, with a full stomach and a contented heart. He, too, felt the genial influence of the spring weather.

There was a stringent law against vagrancy in this trim New Jersey town. There was a

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workhouse and there was a jail which were the terror of wandering tramps, and there was a fee paid by the town for the arrest of every tramp found within its limits. This increased the vigilance of the town officials.

St. Hilaire, ignorant of all this, innocently ate his bread, seeing merely a passing stranger in the person of the constable, who wore no uniform, and carried no token of his exalted rank except a metal star pinned under the lapel of his coat. This officer saw in the dark-bearded, sun-burnt traveller one of those birds of passage the caging of which would benefit the community at large, and put a fee into his own pocket. Stopping before St. Hilaire he inquired: "What are you doing there?"

"Good-morning, sir," replied St. Hilaire cordially.

"I asked, what you were doing sitting there? Don't you know there is a law against vagrancy in this township?"

St. Hilaire did not like the tone or manner of the speaker.

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"I do not understan' you' dam English," he said coldly.

"Don't curse at me. You're a tramp. You must come to the workhouse."

St. Hilaire did not understand, so he said: "No!" and went on with his breakfast, disdainfully ignoring the obnoxious stranger.

"What, you won't work? Then I'll put you in the lockup."

"*Comment?*" inquired St. Hilaire.

"Come off," cried the town official, and he seized St. Hilaire by the collar.

St. Hilaire knocked the village constable down flat in the road.

The blow was sudden and unexpected. It shocked his dignity and made him see stars. He lay for some moments in the dirt, collecting his senses and arranging his ideas, for he was a man of methodical habits and deliberative mind. Then he got upon his feet, brushed the dust from his clothes, and went off toward the village. After breakfast St. Hilaire, with his back against the tree, enjoying the warm sunshine, suddenly found himself faced by

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three men. The constable, reinforced by his deputies, had returned, and these three advanced in a manner unequivocally hostile. St. Hilaire sprang quickly to his feet with the cry: "Brigands! Brigands! Assassins!" and swung his stick in defence.

"Close in upon him," cried the chief, dodging the circling stick.

The deputies drew their batons and awaited a more favorably opportunity.

To St. Hilaire the three men were highwaymen who would cut his throat to rob him of a few cents. He felt that he was in a land where each man held his life by force of arms. Breathing defiantly, his eyes flashing with excitement and anger, he stood firmly upon the defensive. Skilled in the use of arms, his cudgel lightly poised ready to deal a blow, he looked like an antagonist to be reckoned with, so a parley was attempted.

"Do you know that you are resisting the law?" asked the constable sternly, "the law of the township of Meadowlands, New Jersey?" and he threw back the lapel of his

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coat to expose the star in its full magnificence.

St. Hilaire, ignoring the star, saw his chance, and with a lithe spring forward he gave the officer a blow upon the head which sent him to the ground. This seemed to take the spirit out of him, for he lay quite still. The other two men sprang in upon St. Hilaire, swinging their batons lustily. St. Hilaire fought valiantly, wielding his stick with a swordsman's skill. The odds were two to one, but he still held possession of the road and bade fair to rout the attacking party ignominiously.

A tiny rill of blood trickled down over his eye where one blow had reached his forehead; he minded it not at all, and wiping it quickly away with his hand, he advanced on the offensive. The deputy constables gave way. St. Hilaire came with a rush. The man who had fallen to the ground, and lain there so still as to be forgotten, reached up, caught him by the legs and pulled him down. In the next instant three men were upon his prostrate



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body and a pair of handcuffs snapped on his wrists. Then all three took a deep breath.

When they were rested they made their captive rise, and led him back to the village. Feeling himself powerless, he made no further resistance. "If these brigands expect to hold me for ransom they will be grievously disappointed in the result," he thought grimly.

He made no answer to the various questions put to him, except to return contemptuous glances from his fearless eyes, and so under the name of John Doe,—Jean François Raymond, Marquis de St. Hilaire was locked in a cell of the town jail.

CHAPTER VIII

ST. HILAIRE stood before the bar in the dingy country court-room of Meadowlands. The magistrate looked over the top of his glasses at the prisoner. The prisoner looked up at him defiantly. The judge set him down as a desperate character.

"With what is this man charged?" he asked sternly.

"He's a vagabond, your honor, and resisted arrest."

"Vagabond!" St. Hilaire understood that one word. In an instant the truth flashed upon him. It was as a common vagrant that he had been thrown into jail with felons. To have been held for ransom he could have borne with dignity; but to be degraded as a beggar! The blood surged to his face, his eyes flashed fire, he forgot everything but the outrage put upon him; his hand came down upon the rail beneath the judge's desk with

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passion; his voice rang out, drowning that of the judge.

"Monsieur le Judge! It is no vagabond; it is Jean François Raymond——"

An explosion of laughter interrupted him.

He stopped short. The sound of derision needed no translation. He understood; drawing himself up quickly he muttered "*canaille*" and spoke no more.

"Silence!" roared the judge, turning red to the crown of his bald head. "This is a court of justice. Officer, why haven't you an interpreter for this man. Can't you see he is a foreigner?"

"I don't know what language he speaks, your honor," replied the village constable, rubbing his bandaged head, "but I think he's a Turk or a Rooshian."

"Go on with the case," said the judge.

"Your honor, he was seen in the morning loafing about the village; he broke into Mr. Blake's garden, tramped over the strawberry beds, and smashed the glass in the conservatory. In the afternoon he was apprehended

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upon the highway; he resisted arrest and fought like a devil. It took three men to hold him."

"Is Mr. Blake in court?"

A large, well-dressed man of dominant bearing stepped quickly forward.

"Good-morning Mr. Blake," said the justice of the peace politely. Zachary Blake was a man of social and political importance; by far the most important man in Meadowlands.

"Your honor, after investigation I can acquit the prisoner of any maliciousness in destroying my property. The damage to the garden resulted from a stray dog."

He spoke with the clearness and decision of a man of affairs, and looked at his watch mechanically.

"Your honor, the prisoner was seen running through Mr. Blake's garden," volunteered the officer quickly. "I have witnesses here——"

"I ought to know what caused the damage in my garden. If there is nothing more, your

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honor, I should be glad to be excused as I have an engagement in the city," interposed the business man. He spoke in the tone of a man accustomed to having his own way and who would not easily brook opposition.

"Mr. Blake certainly ought to know what caused the damage to his garden," repeated the judge rather sharply, then turning affably to Mr. Blake he added: "Certainly, Mr. Blake, the court has no wish to detain you longer."

"Well, anyhow, your honor, he's a vagabond and he resisted arrest," persisted the officer.

The justice became thoughtful for a moment.

"Ten days or ten dollars," he said sharply and passed to the next case.

Mr. Blake's quick ear caught the sentence as he started to hurry from the court-room, and moved by a feeling of generosity he stepped to the clerk's desk, paid the fine, and hurried off toward the depot, without a look at the man whom he had befriended. St. Hilaire, who, without knowing it, had been in

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danger of an infliction much worse to him than death, was free. He walked slowly along the road. His vivacity had left him. His features were sternly set, for the iron had entered deeply into his soul.

He came to a bridge which spanned a river. The stream, swollen by spring rains, ran swiftly underneath, almost touching the bottom timbers. Just beyond the bridge the river became a cataract and plunged down abruptly thirty or forty feet.

St. Hilaire stopped to watch the sunlight playing in the spray. Suddenly he started from his reverie, for above the roar of the falling water he seemed to hear the shrill note of a human voice.

There was nothing below, but the water lashing itself into green and white foam on the black rocks. But now a louder cry of alarm caused him to turn and look up the river. There he saw a boat floating bottom up, and in the water the head of a man, who was being borne swiftly by the current toward the bridge. He was too poor a swimmer to

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fight the current, and as he floated could only shout for help.

St. Hilaire's heart beat fast as he saw the peril of this fellow-being, and with a shout of encouragement he ran to the spot beneath which the struggling man must pass, and threw himself flat upon the boards. The water poured under the bridge with a sickening gurgle, to come out on the other side with a wild leap.

Nearer came the man, clinging fast to the boat. He seemed to comprehend his one chance for life, and in silence saved his breath and strength for the supreme effort. The swifter current seized him. The boat went round with a whirl and shot under the bridge, and the man, throwing up his hands with a final cry, let go. St. Hilaire, leaning far down, caught him by the arms. For an instant it seemed as though he had been sucked down by the tide and carried under the bridge, but St. Hilaire tightened his grip, held him fast, and exerting all his strength, dragged him up and on to the bridge, where he threw him

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down upon the boards much like a drowning dog. St. Hilaire looked down upon a face pale with cold, and made more ill-favored by blue discolorations from an explosion of gun-powder which at some unfortunate time had damaged one side of his countenance and taken one of his eyes.

The man slowly rose to his feet, and like a wet dog shook himself, covering St. Hilaire with the spray.

"You're a nervy one," he said admiringly, and then walking to the other side of the bridge looked coolly over.

"Whew! that was a close call. That's what comes of a cuss going out in a boat when he don't know nothin' about water. Guess I weren't born to be drowned, anyway!"

St. Hilaire, having critically examined the man whom he had rescued, came to the decision that he did not like his appearance. Never in his life before had he been guilty of such discourtesy, but the experiences of the past twenty-four hours had embittered him.

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He simply turned on his heel and with a brief, "Good-morning, sir," walked away.

"Well, you are a nervy one," called out the other, looking after him with admiration. "I like your sort. You don't ask for any reward. You just yank a feller out of the water and chuck him down like a bag of meal, and then walk off as if you did that sort of a thing every day. Well, I'm glad we met."

And shaking himself again like a wet dog, the man who was not born to be drowned went his way also.

CHAPTER IX

ST. HILAIRE, full of his own thoughts, forgot the unpleasant face almost as soon as it was out of his sight. His last cent had gone for bread the day before, and he was desperately hungry.

"Has a Marquis de St. Hilaire ever begged his bread, or died for want of it?" he pondered grimly. "They have died in many ways, the St. Hilaires: upon the field of battle, upon the field of honor, upon the scaffold; and some had died in bed. It looks as if Raymond de St. Hilaire, the last of the name, would find his end in a ditch by the roadside. But who can tell? The end is not yet."

Although he did not know it, a more imminent danger was another night in the town jail. With his mind busy over the problem of food, and with a head somewhat light for want of it, St. Hilaire had departed from the straight road to the city, and taking a turn to

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the left and then again to the left, had unknowingly retraced his footsteps. The closing hours of the afternoon saw him back again at Meadowlands. In ignorance of his mistake, for he had re-entered the village by another street, he continued persistently in the opposite direction.

Very much like a vagrant was the Marquis de St. Hilaire as he stopped before a gate which opened into some handsome grounds. A large, red brick house stood in the background, shaded by tall trees. It was so comfortable and so homelike with its wide hospitable porch that St. Hilaire lingered to look at it longingly. In the foreground under a maple was a summer-house covered with an ivy vine, and behind it was a rustic bench. Feeling faint and weak, hardly knowing or caring what he did, St. Hilaire walked in and sat down upon the bench.

It was so good to sit there and watch the fountain playing in the centre of the lawn; it was so restful to look at the green grass, and the shimmering new maple leaves with the

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fleecy sky above them; St. Hilaire closed his eyes for a moment.

Celui qui dort, dine: St. Hilaire, completely worn out, immediately fell asleep. Had St. Hilaire continued in his trespass,—to use a harsh but legal term,—had he crossed the lawn and gone behind the house, he would have found himself in the identical garden which had been the scene of the chase of the day before.

On the particuiar afternoon which St. Hilaire had chosen for his feast of slumber, Miss Katherine Blake and her friend, Miss Sophia Drummond, came across the lawn to enjoy a social cup of tea and their own society in the summer-house. It was one of the first warm days of the year, and the two young women in their pretty, tasteful gowns were as fair as the spring sunshine. Although they had graduated from college the year before, neither the weight of years nor of learning rested too heavily upon them, for they ran across the lawn in a way which did great credit to their academic training. Indeed, Miss Blake had

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been a bright star in the athletic firmament. She had made several "records" which were the pride of her classmates; had capped the climax by reducing the time of the hundred yards dash to—I am afraid to state the small number of seconds—and had departed, leaving her name enshrined among those of other heroines of her alma mater. Miss Blake was held by some of her friends to be a "strong-minded" young woman. This does not mean that she wore her hair cut short, entertained ultra-radical ideas in regard to the emancipation of her sex, nor yet went abroad in any unusual and alarmingly unbecoming costume. At twenty-three she was a young woman with a healthy mind, a graceful figure, and a pair of eyes made beautiful with the light of intellect and spirit which dwelt there.

These two charming girls laughed and chatted over their tea in the summer-house as gayly as larks. The fragrant odor of tea and sandwiches was wafted deliciously to St. Hilaire in his sleep, and made him dream that he was at a feast. He ate and ate at this tan-

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talizing phantom board, continually calling for more. The butler who was waiting upon the young ladies, hearing a faint muttering behind the vines, went outside to investigate.

To his horror and indignation he discovered a travel-stained man fast asleep upon the bench. Putting his hand with some repugnance upon the fellow's shoulders, he shook him.

"*Encore du filet,*" murmured the hungry sleeper.

"Come, get up," said the butler in a stage whisper.

"*Garçon, versez-moi du vin.*"

The butler shook him roughly. St. Hilaire, torn rudely from his feast, pronounced, sleepily, in broken English: "Baker, sell me small loaf bread."

"Clavers," called Miss Blake from the summer-house, "Who is that talking, and what does he want?"

"It's a man, Miss Blake, who is asking for a loaf of bread. I'm sending him about his business."

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"Give him some of these sandwiches."

"It's only a tramp, ma'am. He's going quietly enough. Don't be afraid," replied Clavers. "Be off with you, now," said the valiant butler to St. Hilaire.

"Do you suppose I will let a man go away hungry," cried Miss Blake peremptorily, as she hurried from the summer-house, followed by Miss Drummond.

At the sudden appearance of two handsome young women St. Hilaire sprang to his feet with a bewildered air; but his natural instinct of politeness came to his rescue immediately, and he bowed gracefully: "Mesdemoiselles!"

"Would you like something to eat?" asked Miss Blake holding out the plate of tempting sandwiches.

St. Hilaire had not tasted food all that day, yet he hesitated. Miss Blake saw how fatigued he looked, how his hand sought the arm of the settee for support, and she thought he was going to faint.

"Clavers," she said, "go up to the house as

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quickly as you can and bring down a bottle of port."

"Port! Miss Blake!" gasped the butler. "The old crusted port! There's a bottle of cooking-sherry in the pantry——"

"I said port, Clavers," said Miss Blake. "Please make haste."

"Here, take some more sandwiches," she continued, putting the plate into St. Hilaire's hand. "I have sent up to the house for a glass of wine."

St. Hilaire stood with the plate in his hand, looked at the lady, and said slowly with great effort, but with an accent of gratitude: "I do not understan' English. You are good."

Rather diffidently, with rising color and a hesitancy of tongue which increased the charm, Miss Blake essayed some of the French with which her mind had been stored at college:

"Come and rest while you eat, I have sent to the house for wine."

At the sound of his own language, spoken, not with a Parisian accent, but by a sweet

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voice and in tones accented by sympathy, the tears came to St. Hilaire's eyes. He put the plate of food down upon the bench, as he replied: "I cannot eat at present, Mademoiselle. I am no longer hungry. Your generosity—the sound of my native tongue"—a sob choked him—"You will pardon this weakness, Mademoiselle, will you not?"

"Come and rest yourself, you are tired," she said, and led the way to the arbor. "Here is good wine," she continued, gaining courage and grasp upon the language. (Clavers drew the cork with a wry face.) "It is good for you. Now some more of the bread and meat. You shall have better food soon, but you must eat this now."

St. Hilaire ate and drank obediently. The very manner with which she filled his glass and replenished his plate made his heart glow with gratitude.

"I cannot find words with which to thank you for what you have done for me, Mademoiselle. It is not alone the food to the hungry, but the kindness to the stranger."

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"I am happy to help you," she interrupted;
"I have done very little."

"You have done much, Mademoiselle. As you see, I am a stranger, a Frenchman. I have been travelling in the Western part of your country. I have been unfortunate financially, and see myself obliged to make some of my journey on foot. You have put new heart into me. It is everything." He spoke rapidly, his eyes shining with gratitude.

When he spoke thus volubly Katherine understood him more through his expression and gestures than by his words.

"You have friends in New York?"

"No one, Mademoiselle."

"You look very worn. Remain here to-night, and continue your journey to-morrow."

"How, Mademoiselle, you offer to give shelter to a stranger passing by your gate, and are not afraid to take him under your roof. Ah, Mademoiselle, you are so kind! The poor traveller thanks you with all his heart and accepts the hospitality so generously extended to him."

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"Katherine, what *is* he saying when he puts his hand on his heart?" inquired Miss Drummond with great curiosity.

"He is accepting an invitation to stay here to-night."

"You don't mean to say you asked him?"

"Why should I not give the poor man a night's lodging?"

"Is it proper?"

"Where is the impropriety? He can sleep in the little room over the stable."

"But your father and mother are in the city."

"They will be home to-night."

"But you know nothing about him; is it safe?"

"There are Clavers and the coachman for protectors. I wish you would be careful, Sophia; he may understand more English than we imagine. Clavers, see that the room over the stable is made ready for him."

"He does not look as if he had been used to very luxurious quarters," commented Miss Drummond.

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"All the more reason why he should have a comfortable bed to-night," replied Katherine. "He looks like a gentleman; don't you think I had better offer him one of the spare rooms in the house?"

"Katherine! what are you dreaming of?" cried her friend.

Katherine laughed. "I fail to see anything out of the way in offering a night's lodging to the poor fellow, but to satisfy you, Sophia, we'll give him the little room over the stable. Clavers, take him up to the house and see that he has a hot dinner. Then make him as comfortable as possible for the night."

Clavers looked highly incensed, but he conducted St. Hilaire to the house without a word.

St. Hilaire allowed himself to drift along with the stream of his good fortune. A dinner of hot soup and roast meat was the most delicious meal he had ever tasted, and the sight of the clean little room with its snowy bed was still more grateful to his tired senses. As he began to remove his clothes in antici-

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pation of a night of absolute rest the door was pushed open, following a quick knock, and the butler entered, bearing a tray upon which were a glass of wine and a plate of biscuits.

Clavers made an attempt to relax his stern features as he muttered: "Miss Blake's compliments. She thought you might like a little nip before retiring." And he set the tray upon a table by the bedside.

St. Hilaire, with his shirt off, had just plunged his face and arms into a basin of refreshing water. He looked out from the towel, visibly annoyed at the intrusion.

Clavers answered the look with a stare, not so much of admiration at the well-developed shoulders and rounded muscles of the arms, as with curiosity at a peculiar scar which began under the brown throat and ran across the chest to the shoulder.

"At what are you staring? Leave the room," cried St. Hilaire, forgetting that the butler understood no French.

Clavers endeavored to force a pleasant

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smile, but St. Hilaire saw an expression of mingled antipathy and fear upon his countenance.

"I would not keep a man like that in my employ for a week," thought St. Hilaire, as with a wave of the hand he dismissed Clavers, just as he would have dismissed his own valet:

"Go out queek! Is it not?"

The butler gave a scowl as he left the room. Outside the door he paused. Very cautiously he turned the key in the lock, saying to himself: "Just a little sleeping-draught in that wine won't harm him any, and it may be the saving of our silver. I saw a suspicious character over in the woods by the lake this morning. It may have been him." And Clavers, with a feeling of relief, went off to his own bed.

St. Hilaire sat down in a chair and took up the glass of wine. How thoughtful of his beautiful hostess to send him some refreshment before he retired! Never had it been his lot to know such a paragon as this fair American, and with a sigh, partly of fatigue

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and partly of regret, he put the glass of wine to his lips.

St. Hilaire had a very keen taste. His lips puckered and his dark eyebrows drew together. The thrifty Clavers had deemed it a waste of good material to use any other wine than the cheap cooking sherry to disguise his sleeping-powder.

"She is lovely, divine!" murmured St. Hilaire, and once more tasted the wine.

"Yes, she is very lovely and divine, but I *cannot* drink this vile stuff, even though she may have poured it with her own beautiful hands," and quickly tossing the contents of the glass out of the window he threw off his clothes, and in a few moments was carried off by the deep sleeping-draught of fatigue.

It was far into the night when he awoke with a feeling of oppression on his chest and a dull pain in the head. The room seemed hot and close; only a slight breeze came in through the one window.

"I have slept too many nights in the open, I am not accustomed to the comforts of a

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house," he thought, rising languidly to open the door. He found it locked.

"What is this, am I a prisoner?" He put his hand to his head; it ached dully, bringing back the vivid recollection of wine he had once taken in the town of Diamond.

"I do not like the face of that servant. Can it be possible that he drugged the wine and meditates robbery? I forget I am without a sou!" And he laughed aloud.

Nevertheless, he slipped into his clothes and stepped to the open window.

There was no moon. The night was very dark and very still, save for the song of some young frogs in a neighboring pond. St. Hilaire walked uneasily back to the door, tried it again mechanically, turned and looked about the room. A harness hung on a peg by the door. St. Hilaire took down the reins, tied them to the foot of the iron bedstead, and dropped one end out of the window. A moment later he was standing upon the lawn sniffing the night air with a sense of relief.

"I do not like this being a prisoner," he

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said to himself. "I much prefer to lie in freedom upon the grass." He looked up at the large comfortable house. "She lives in this beautiful place. She is rich. How odd it must be to be rich. I was rich once, but I did not realize it then. It seems so long ago I have almost forgotten."

St. Hilaire was wide awake now. There was a sense of wild freedom in the solitude and darkness. He walked nearer to the house. "She is sleeping peacefully within, entirely oblivious to me here outside her windows. She has lived among these scenes all her life, and to-morrow and the day after, and so on for many days she will continue to live here, but to-morrow I shall be forgotten by her, and she will become only a memory to me. But a bright memory; the memory of one who is young and very fair and very good, who out of the bounty of her goodness was kind to me; therefore I shall never forget her. I will pick this little flower from the garden, perhaps a flower that she herself has planted, and keep it in remembrance." He

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leaned forward, and as he straightened up again he found himself looking in at one of the dining-room windows, which was open. Just as he wondered at the carelessness of the servants of the house, he heard a low, jingling sound, like the smothered clink of silver, and thought he saw a shadow pass along the wall, and disappear from the room. His first impulse was to give the alarm, but the shout died on his lips as the suspicion flashed over him that it was the butler. If it was the butler an alarm would serve only as a warning, and perhaps throw the crime upon St. Hilaire himself; there was but one thing to do; take the maurauder red-handed at his work. St. Hilaire slipped off his shoes and climbed through the window. He stood perfectly still for a few moments. He strained his ears but could hear nothing. He knew he was in the dining-room, for he could make out the long dining-table and high-backed chairs. Upon the table was a dark object of irregular outline. It proved to be what he had suspected, the family plate neatly wrapped up by an ex-

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perienced hand. Holding it very carefully, lest he too should make a noise, he slipped it under the table, tiptoed back to the window, and looked out. If there was an outside accomplice, he was not visible. St. Hilaire closed and locked the window with the utmost precaution. He slipped out of the dining-room, passed through the library with all the stealth of the thief himself, and standing in the long hallway, listened. He thought he heard a creaking noise on the landing above, but whether a door had been moved, whether it was a footstep as stealthy as his own upon the stairs above him, or whether it was merely one of the many crackings which frequently assail the overstrained ear in the dark, he could not tell. Hugging the wall as closely as possible, so as to avoid any one who might be stealing down the stairway, he waited a few moments and then began to ascend.

A board snapped sharply. This time it was under his own feet. He stood still. As if in answer there came a faint creak from above and St. Hilaire felt sure that it was

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caused by the swinging of a door. He stood still for a full minute. He heard nothing more, however, and being obliged either to retreat or to go forward, he proceeded with great caution until he stood at the top of the stairs.

Opposite him was a door, half open. He went in. The small room gave evidence that it was the dressing-room of a lady.

"It is her boudoir," thought St. Hilaire.

French windows, opening outward, gave access to a balcony.

"Everywhere open windows," thought he, and stepping forward looked out. There was no one.

He re-entered the room, and turning to the right put his hand upon a doorknob.

"It may be her bedroom." He paused—"But if the robber should be in there?" He opened the door quickly and stepped back, blinded by the bright light from a bull's-eye lantern. "Throw up your hands and don't move or speak," whispered a voice.

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St. Hilaire, not understanding, merely looked again, and saw a revolver pointing at his head. Behind the revolver, crouching low, his one eye glistening, was the man with the speckled face.

"It's my nervy pal," said this man in a whisper, "I'm blowed if we ain't both on the same lay." He grinned and looked hideously ugly, but the hand which held the pistol varied not a hair. St. Hilaire did not move.

"I'll tell you what I'll do" continued the man in the same whisper. "We're both on the same lay. I'm first, but you did the square thing by me yesterday. The sparklers are in her room," and he pointed to a door on the other side of the boudoir. "We'll go halves on the swag. We will, as sure as my name is Blinky."

St. Hilaire, understanding nothing except that his brains were still in line with the muzzle of the pistol, was anxious to gain time, so he whispered: "Alright, damtief!"

"Then we're pards in this deal." The housebreaker lowered his weapon and stepped

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out of the closet—into the clutches of St. Hilaire.

"Leggo my wrists!" hissed the thief struggling to free himself. St. Hilaire tightened his grip: "I 'ave you, is it not?" he whispered.

"Want ter hog the whole thing, that's yer game?" muttered Blinky, a vindictive look flashing in his one eye; and drawing back with the sudden litheness of a snake, he swung one hand free. St. Hilaire caught him quickly with one arm around the waist, and there began a silent contest for the revolver.

St. Hilaire might well have shouted an alarm, and brought the household to his assistance, but in the excitement of the strife he forgot all else, and they struggled in silence. Blinky was the smaller man of the two, but he was as springy as a coil of wire, and could cling like a cat. St. Hilaire swung him clear of the floor, his heels came in contact with the slender legs of a table upon which was a delicate china tea-service, and brought the whole thing to the ground with a crash.

With a last redoubled effort Blinky broke

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away. "Clumsy jay!" he cried in a tone of disgust, and was out on the balcony like a flash.

St. Hilaire sprang after him. The man already had one leg over the railing; St. Hilaire seized the other. The burglar struck him a quick blow on the head with the pistol-butt, swung over the railing and away into the night. St. Hilaire staggered back into the room, the stars dancing before his eyes. A key turned in the lock of one of the doors, and through a confused blur he saw Miss Blake standing in the doorway with one hand on the switch of the electric light.

With an effort St. Hilaire banished the look of pain from his face, and as soon as he could find his voice spoke reassuringly: "Mademoiselle Blake, fear nothing. The danger is past. The thief has escaped, but God be praised he was discovered in time, and you are unharmed."

If Miss Blake was frightened she concealed her fear with great self-control. She was breathing quickly with the excitement of the

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sudden alarm, and though she did not speak, she gave him a sweeping look from head to foot.

St. Hilaire grew suddenly conscious that he was without his shoes.

"Ah, pardon, it was to capture the robber, with your permission I will retire and complete my toilet." He took one step forward.

"Stop where you are," she commanded abruptly, and out of the folds of the dressing-gown came a small revolver.

St. Hilaire started back.

"Ungrateful!" exclaimed Katherine; "I gave you food and a place to sleep in, and this is how you pay for it."

In her excitement she spoke in English, but the look she gave him and the tone of her voice interpreted her meaning.

He flushed red, then turned quite pale and stood silent.

"You were trying to rob the house which gave you shelter, oh, you brave creature."

St. Hilaire answered, speaking proudly.

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"Mademoiselle Blake, I do not know what you are saying to me in your own language which sounds so harsh and cold; but if you have an unjust suspicion of me, let me tell you that it is your thanks which I deserve, for I have this night saved your property. With your permission, Mademoiselle, I will retire," and he stepped toward the door.

"Stop," she cried, in French. "Stop, or I will fire."

With a reckless laugh, St. Hilaire came forward until the revolver touched his breast.

"Well, Mademoiselle, why do you not shoot?"

St. Hilaire felt his heart beat wildly, as he looked into the clear eyes so near his own.

"Mademoiselle Blake," he began fiercely, "I have not understood the words you spoke. I never wish to know them, for I understood the tone. I have to-night risked my life for you. That is nothing; you were kind to me, and because of that I would die for you. But the cruel look you gave me, it kills me." He

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had begun fiercely enough, but his voice broke before he ended. Her hand dropped to her side. In spite of his seeming perfidy he had moved her. She felt a sudden pity for him, and seemed about to question him when footsteps sounded along the hallway, accompanied by the high-pitched voice of the excited Clavers, and Mr. Blake's quick, imperious tones.

"Shoot, Mademoiselle, and let them find me dead at your feet."

"They may shoot you," she exclaimed. "Jump from the window!"

"I will remain," he declared.

"Go, do you hear! Go!" There was both command and entreaty in her voice.

For a moment St. Hilaire stood irresolute; catching up the hand which held the revolver, he raised it to his lips, then sprung through the open window, clearing the balcony in the leap, into the soft earth of the garden beneath.

He was on his feet in an instant and off across the lawn. Several shots rang out from

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the window above. Fearing nothing, caring nothing, he swung himself over the hedge into the road. Here he paused, and looked back at the house, the blood leaping wildly in his veins. Lights flashed in the windows, and he could see the shadows of men and women running to and fro. Doors slammed, and he heard sounds of voices, but there was no pursuit. In his reckless mood he felt an almost irresistible impulse to go back and search for the real law-breaker.

They might shoot him, St. Hilaire, for the robber! He cared not.

Why had he jumped from the window? Because a woman had commanded it! And that woman, that glorious woman whose like he had never seen before, believed him guilty. She had pitied him, but she despised him.

Why was he running away? In the darkness he could feel his cheek burn with shame. He felt that he must go back. They all should see how he despised them; how he could meet her contempt with contempt. He would go back and they could kill him. He

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paused. Ah, if they would only shoot him, yes; but they would put him in jail. Not that! he could not support that; and with his heart swelling with outraged pride and despair he turned and walked away, utterly indifferent as to where the road might lead him.

CHAPTER X

THE road which St. Hilaire took led him to the city. He was heartsick and almost beaten to the ground. He looked at the signet ring upon the little finger of his left hand. It was a family jewel, and in spite of all privation he had so far kept it safe. To pawn it now would give him funds enough to take him home. But afterward? He had no fortune at home. Was it not better to try to live by work in the New World, where he was a stranger, than to try to make an appearance upon nothing in a world where he was well known? He had made a vow; under impulse and in folly perhaps, but still he had made a vow, and the St. Hilaires always held to their word, and when they had made vows, however extravagant or irrational, they had always kept them. He had thrown down the glove and would abide the issue.

He stifled his home-sickness as he stifled

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his hunger and looked about him for work. The only work which could be discovered, and which he could do was in a stable. To refuse it was to starve. St. Hilaire had tasted hunger, and he preferred not to starve.

Imagine a nobleman working for a horse, feeding him, cleaning out his stall, rubbing his coat until it shone like a satin gown! No gentleman is the worse for contact with a fine animal or for hard work, and St. Hilaire was a gentleman.

When not engaged in his daily occupation he spent hours pouring over the pages of an English grammar, and wrestling valiantly with the rudiments of the language. He also walked about the city: on the avenue, in the crowded business streets, and often on the steamship docks. He felt sure that even in the big city some day he would find Zavanno.

Thus he lived all summer. There were hotter places in the city than the stable. It was large and airy. Every day the hose swashed coolly over the floor and out upon the street. When St. Hilaire looked into the

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stable-yard he was reminded, by contrast, of Deauville, and the coast of Normandy; and the melodies from the joyous hurdy-gurdy which came every evening to the block, carried him in spirit to the Théâtre Français.

There was an engine-house in the middle of the block and a saloon on the corner; between the two, life was not unvaried for the residents of the district.

One evening St. Hilaire, sitting out in front of the building with a newspaper and a well-thumbed little green lexicon, saw a hansom coming down the street at a smart rate. In the cab sat a tall young fellow with a clear complexion, and wavy blond hair. As he passed, St. Hilaire observed a watch in his hand and heard a quick word spoken to the cabman.

"A young man much pressed for time," he thought. Before his eyes returned to the columns of his newspaper, they travelled down the street. In front of the saloon were a man and woman in earnest conversation. So animated did it become on the man's part that

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he so far forgot himself as to strike his companion.

The young man in the cab gave a flying leap to the curb, and without a word knocked the brute down.

St. Hilaire, who had risen from his chair with an exclamation of horror, saw the sequence of the drama follow with the rapidity of a moving picture from a kinetosc. A man picking himself up from the gutter, a tearful woman, with strange inconsistency, stretching out her hand to him; an angry crowd of men, which seemed to swarm from the saloon, and being unaware of the cause of the knock-down blow, saw in the well-dressed stranger the aggressor, and threatened vengeance. The young man, as if disdaining any attempt at explanation, stood with his back against the wall coolly watching the culmination of the performance.

St. Hilaire saw all this while he ran quickly down the street and stepped to the young man's side. The tall man looked at him, and his blue eye kindled with surprise.

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"Where the dickens did you come from?"

"Over from the stable."

"Did you ever play football?"

"Nevaire; it is to kick?"

"Watch me buck the centre. I must catch a train."

The crowd had closed in about them. A big stick threatened the tall man's head. St. Hilaire felt a sharp blow in the side which made him catch his breath, and a brick clattered on the sidewalk. The tall man, giving vent to the war-cry of an Indian, sprang forward; those in front of him seemed to melt away, and he ran down the street like a stag, straight for the ferry-house.

St. Hilaire picked his way through the tangle of men on the pavement, and walked back to the stable. Incidents had a way of subsiding in this street almost as quickly as they arose; when St. Hilaire got back he found O'Brien standing in his door-way chewing a straw.

"Say Bay-yard, do you know who that chap was?"

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"I know him not," was the reply.

"That was Livingston."

"Livingston?" St. Hilaire elevated his eyebrows inquiringly.

"Yes, George Livingston."

"Still, I know him not."

"Say, where've you been living all your life? Last year George Livingston was one of the best *amateurs* in the country. He threw the hammer one hundred and thirty-seven feet eleven and a half inches, and holds the world's record for putting the shot. Say, Bay-yard, he could chew up that corner gang; and you went over to give him a hand. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He is a splendid fine man," replied St. Hilaire, resuming his newspaper and dictionary.

Mr. George Livingston, the famous college athlete, who held a number of "world's records," and had won gold medals enough to satisfy the ambition of a field marshal; who, a year ago, heard his name in everybody's mouth, and saw his picture variously

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distorted in the different newspapers, found himself to-day a young man struggling along untrumpeted in the great world of business.

George Livingston never forgot an obligation, and the next day he sent to O'Brien's stable and asked that the man who had helped him in a pinch would do him the favor of calling.

"You, the man who 'helped Livingston in a pinch,'" laughed O'Brien.

"Mistaire Livingston is a gentleman. I accept his invitation," replied St. Hilaire.

When the caller was announced, Mr. Livingston tossed the evening paper to one side and rose to face a well-dressed stranger, for St. Hilaire, when not at work, could not help being somewhat fastidious about his toilet, and could not help looking like a gentleman. Livingston gave him a look of polite inquiry.

"I am Mistaire Bayard."

"I beg your pardon, but you have the advantage of me."

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"I come accordin' your desire. From O'Brien stable, you know?"

"The dickens you say. Excuse my forgetting. By Jove you can't be the fellow who so pluckily stood by me?" and George Livingston was quite overcome with surprise.

"I was not so pluckily. I came to rescue, but did nothing, except to stan' and see Mistaire Livingston make the football of his enemies. It was magnifique," replied St. Hilaire.

Livingston recovering from his surprise said:

"Won't you be seated, Mr. — I beg pardon I did not catch the name."

"Bayard, Jean Bayard." And St. Hilaire, perfectly at ease, sat down.

"I was glad of your help and must beg your pardon for having left you so unceremoniously," said Livingston.

St. Hilaire turned the subject: "And your train, you catch him all right?"

"Yes, thank you, I just made it. Will you smoke? There are cigars and cigarettes." Livingston pushed a small table forward.

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"Thank y . . ."

The two men each lit a cigarette. Livingston took a few long puffs, then tossing the cigarette to one side said abruptly:

"Why in the name of all creation do you work in a stable?"

"My dear Mistaire Livingston, it is necessaire every one to live."

"Yes, but why work in a stable? You are a gentleman, there is no disguising that. Is it a joke?"

"It is not a joke. I was not train' in the affaires like you in America. I tell myself, what I do to live? I understan' the horse. It is ver' simply."

"And do you like to do it?"

"In Paris perhaps no, but here in America, where all labor is ennoble, it is différent. I conduct my horse. You conduct your commercial affaires. Everybody, he is equal."

Livingston opened his eyes. St. Hilaire looked about the comfortably furnished room, the habitation of a man of refinement. He noticed the books, the pictures, and the piano.

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He looked in vain for any display of the trophies of the great man's prowess. As to his achievements on the field of sport Livingston was modest, but as to his name—George Livingston—he was proud. His ancestors had stood in the front rank of those who had made the country. They had fought in the Revolution. For generations they had been famous as patriots and statesmen. Livingston was justly proud of such forebears; and although he did not know it, was at heart a little of an aristocrat.

St. Hilaire's ancestors had won their name by the sword. For centuries they had stood at the elbow of their king, becoming richer and more powerful with each generation. The Revolution had upset all that; the St. Hilaire of that day had leaned somewhat toward the popular side; a reactionary strain had crept into his blood, and his descendant, Raymond de St. Hilaire, although justly proud of his name and the race from which he sprung, was, without knowing it, somewhat democratic.

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The two young men became greatly interested in each other, and almost before they knew it were deep in a conversation on art, literature, and music which lasted several hours.

St. Hilaire rose to go.

"Come again," said the delighted Livingston. "Say, can't you dine with me to-morrow?"

"I regret much, to-morrow no—business prevent."

George Livingston was silent for a moment.

"Mr. Bayard, you did me a service; now I want to help you. You must accept my aid in the same spirit that it is offered."

St. Hilaire bowed.

"You must give up this manual labor; it can't pay you; and take up some mercantile pursuit."

"Ah, to sit on a high stool, and write in a big book all the day, it is more honorable, yes?"

"Of course this is a democracy, Mr. Bayard, where all honest labor is equally respect-

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ed, but you will find that there are certain kinds of work which reflect more honor in the telling of them afterward than in their actual performance."

"That is odd, I have always think that the honaire was the brave deed itself, and not the talk."

"Those were deeds of the sword rather than the ploughshare or the spade."

"Ah!" and St. Hilaire lifted his eyebrows.

"Now there is Zachary Blake."

St. Hilaire started.

"Zachary Blake?" he repeated.

"Yes, the millionaire traction-man. He began life driving a car through these streets. He is to-day one of the largest stockholders of the Traction Company. The men of his generation can recall him on a winter's morning running the snow-plough to keep the tracks clear; the reins of eight horses in his big fist, the glow of health in his cheeks, and bellowing out commands with a voice like the bull of Bashan. To-day, as he sits at his dinner-table with his handsome wife opposite him,

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amid a prodigality of silver and glass and flowers, he takes a keen delight in telling his guests how his ears were frozen driving the machine up Broadway during a blizzard. His guests, who perhaps may not have had his early advantages, admire him for his strength, and respect him for his honesty in being proud of it. And he respects and admires himself for it in all sincerity, and feels that he is the equal of any man and the superior of most. He looks about the table proudly and says: 'When I was courting Mrs. Blake there, I was only earning twenty dollars a week. When I got raised to twenty-five we were married and went to live in a little flat opposite a brewery. We've never been happier than we were in those days. There's an example for you young bachelors.'

"Ah, and he wish his daughter marry to another car-driver just like himself?" inquired St. Hilaire.

"He considers his daughter, Katherine Blake, the equal of any prince," replied Livingston, "and in that he is right."

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"Katherine Blake," said St. Hilaire to himself. "Her name was Katherine Blake. It is the same. That describes her. The equal of any prince."

"Well, Mr. Bayard, what do you think of my suggestion?"

St. Hilaire started from his reverie. "Suggestion? Ah, I forget him; what he was?"

"That you allow me to assist you to some—let us say more appropriate business."

"I earn not the salt. I repeat to you I have been nevaire train' in the affaires. I am good for nothings."

"You shall learn. I am one of the minor officials of the company, but I can give you a small position in my department to begin with."

"I cannot sit on a *lit'le* stool and write in a *big* book."

"Nonsense. You have brains. They are a marketable commodity in this world of ours."

St. Hilaire seized him by the hand. "I thank you for the offaire, so generous, so

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kind. You are not offend' that I refuse him?"

Livingston laughed. "Offended. No! but I don't see what there remains for you to do unless you lay in a stock of very fine clothes, and allow me to introduce you as a foreign prince. With your address and manner you might capture an American heiress; you know they are being caught every day."

The bright color came to St. Hilaire's cheek.

"I did not come to your country to marry an heiress, Mistaire Livingston, I come to make a fortune. I am misfortunate—I lose him, and I nevaire make him now, but I preserve my honaire."

"My dear sir, you must not take it so seriously; the thought came to me, how easily you might deceive some people if you wanted to. It was only a little joke on my part."

"Ah pardon, I nevaire understan' the lit'le joke unless he is label'," and St. Hilaire laughed.

"There is one thing you ought to be able

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to do, Mr. Bayard, which requires no mercantile training. You can teach French. With your Parisian accent, I feel positive you would make a success of it."

St. Hilaire stood in thought for a few moments.

Livingston continued: "I am not wealthy, Mr. Bayard, but I have influential connections. I know I can aid you materially to make a start. Speaking seriously, why don't you undertake it?"

"Well, perhaps I do that, so I learn also the English. I throw—how you say?—I throw two stone at one bird."

CHAPTER XI

THE Marquis de St. Hilaire became a professor of French. Although it may not be the usual thing to find a French nobleman behind a French grammar, it is not without precedent. Even royalty, while under a temporary cloud, has earned a livelihood by teaching school, and doubtless applied the birch warmly to youthful republicans,—*sans culottes*.

Thanks to the aid of Mr. Livingston, St. Hilaire prospered from the start. During the year which followed, he worked hard, and not only taught French, but managed to overcome the heretofore apparently insurmountable obstacle which the English language presented, so that he now spoke it fluently, although there still clung to his tongue a faint reminder of his soft accent.

Livingston, who had always been one of his most assiduous pupils, had felt his regard and friendship for the light-hearted gentleman increase daily. One evening, putting down the

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copy of a French play they were reading, he said: "Bayard, I want you to come off on a few days' vacation."

"My friend, Livingston, I must remain and push the wheel of industrie round and round, which you have started."

"You have worked steadily for over a year. You take no vacations, and shun all social invitations. Such industry is more demoralizing than idleness."

"But the classes go on all the time. There is always some one who wishes to learn. I must work; it is to live."

"We can arrange to have the classes stop for a few days. I need a short vacation, and I want you for a companion."

"You need me, my friend; it is enough; let the wheel turn itself."

"I have been invited to spend a few days at the country house of a relative of mine, Mrs. Harrison Romaine. She is a widow, very rich and very pretty. She is now at her villa by the sea, where she is spending her time being bored. I have accepted the invitation,

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with the condition that I should bring a friend, to which she gladly consents. She is living very quietly, her widow's weeds encircling her in a sort of a monastic veil, so our going will be an errand of mercy."

"You desire it, my friend, it is enough; I shall go with you."

The mansion of Mrs. Romaine stood boldly on a rocky promontory, with its wide, pretentious face toward the sea. It was built of gray stone; massive, cold, repellent.

The large doors once passed, the interior was as invitingly luxurious as the outside was severe and menacing.

Mr. Harrison Romaine, who before his departure for the spiritual world had employed his talents in acquiring a generous slice of this one, had left his widow so plethorically endowed with wealth as might have induced an attack of monetary indigestion, had not the lady been wise enough to avoid the threatened danger by the most heroic expenditures.

St. Hilaire, whose acquaintance with palaces had been limited to those of the Euro-

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pean nobility, opened wide his eyes. The carpetings were such soft rich textiles from the Orient, the walls were covered with so many rare tapestries and paintings, the rooms were filled with so many pieces of antique furniture from the old salons of Europe, that he had the feeling of being a visitor in a public art gallery, rather than a guest in the home of a private citizen.

The fair relict of the late, lamented millionaire, and the owner of all this magnificence, entered the room. Her widow's weeds had softly melted into a harmonious lavender, while at her corsage she wore some violets, matching the color of her eyes. She seemed to exhale the essence of wealth. From the silken tresses of her blond hair it seemed to shine in golden rays; the rustle of her dress gave forth a musical sound like the crispness of new bank-notes, while the star sparkling on her breast, the only jewel which she wore, hinted knowingly at an inexhaustible mine of diamonds within the reach of her fair hands.

When Livingston presented his friend, Mr.

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Bayard, to this golden argosy, she held out her hand cordially.

"You are most welcome to Castle Rock!" she said, with her large blue eyes fixed intently on St. Hilaire. He started; much more taken aback than she, for he was holding the hand of Eleanor Madison.

She seemed about to call him "Monsieur de St. Hilaire," when, changing her mind with the rapidity so natural to her, she turned and introduced him to her friends, as "Mr. Bayard, an old friend—of Mr. Livingston." A few minutes later dinner was announced, and Mrs. Romaine led the way vivaciously to her large dining-hall, upon which Harrison Romaine had spent much thought and lavished many dollars. St. Hilaire in a revery of wonder took his place in the small party of eight at the round mahogany table. The centrepiece was a bank of American Beauty roses so enormous as almost to hide the beautiful Mrs. Romaine on the other side. The roses were American, but little else in the room was native to this country. The pict-

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ures on the walls came from the brushes of foreign artists; the carpets under their feet were woven in the East; while all the rich furniture, from the chairs and tables, to the choice china and glass, were the products of the rarest European workmanship. "Dieu!" exclaimed St. Hilaire to himself, "these Westerners have indeed sacked Europe."

Mrs. Romaine talked gayly and incessantly, with the enjoyment of one recently liberated from captivity. She possessed the same air of careless and graceful freedom which had attracted and interested him when he had first seen her.

Through the centrepiece of roses the eyes of the lady were frequently fixed upon St. Hilaire with an expression of interest and also of interrogation, but she gave no sign that she had ever known him.

After dinner St. Hilaire, lingering in a corridor to examine a piece of Beauvais tapestry, saw Mrs. Romaine draw near him. He turned quickly from the rare piece of workmanship on the wall to the pretty woman at his side,

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saying: "It is very beautiful." His hand pointed to the tapestry, while his eyes dwelt upon the delicate outlines of her face. She gave a careless assent, saying quickly: "Did you notice that I was studying your face during dinner?"

St. Hilaire's eyes laughed as he replied: "Madame is perhaps artistic, she models heads in—how do you say?—in the mud?—Oh, clay. Yes?"

"I was wondering how the Marquis of St. Hilaire could live away from Paris. I was wondering why he was living here under the name of Bayard," she said, speaking French.

"My name *is* Bayard," he replied in his own tongue.

"Yes, I know: 'Jean Raymond Bayard de St. Hilaire,' so is my name Eleanor Madison."

"Ah, madame," he said quickly, "you have had the misfortune to be twice widowed."

She gave a shrug of her shoulders which was entirely French, as she said: "The law removed Régal, and the good Lord saw fit to take Romaine, so I am very much a widow."



--Kodak

She raised her large violet eyes to his face

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"And you have come back to live in your native land?"

"I am a bird of passage in this world," she answered lightly, "I am constantly on the wing. I flit from London to the Rivièra and back to Paris in a kind of yearly migration. I go to Lenox and Newport, Palm Beach and California. I live—nowhere."

"There was a note of melancholy in her voice, and involuntarily he exclaimed: "And with all this Madame Romaine is not happy!"

She raised her large violet eyes to his face, with an almost inaudible sigh.

Although twice a widow she looked as young as when he had first seen her, and her eyes were more potent than ever. Now they were laughing, now ready to fill with tears, now veiled with alluring softness. Her exquisite mouth suggested dainty fruit, and her lips had a way of trembling with each passing emotion.

"What I long for and what I have never had, is sympathy," she went on. "I married Anatole Régal, the artist. He stopped painting as

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soon as he married me, and spent my money with a royal hand." (St. Hilaire winced.) "I got a divorce from him; then I came home—to this country I mean; met and married Mr. Romaine. And now, well now I'm a real widow, that is all. Tell me about yourself."

"Madam, there is little to tell. I came to this country, I tried to make a fortune, I failed. I prefer to be called by my name Bayard rather than by my title. That is all."

"Is that *all* you have to tell me?" she asked earnestly.

"There is nothing more—of particular interest."

She laughed. "There is a mystery about you. I adore mysteries. Perhaps I know more about you than you imagine. I may surprise you some day."

"That would not be difficult," he replied, laughing, looking into the vivacious face.

"But my surprise will keep a little longer; I wish to arouse your curiosity. Now come," she added lightly, "give me your arm. There is to be some music. I have invited a few

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guests, a very few, for it is the first time since Mr. Romaine died." She looked down for a moment, then raised her eyes. St. Hilaire saw no trace of sorrow there.

They entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Romaine talking in a sprightly way. It was impossible to listen to her, to look down at her pretty face, to catch the soft light in her eyes, and not be interested. St. Hilaire was interested, entertained, enchanted, until suddenly he ceased to hear her.

Like a flash Mrs. Romaine stopped the tinkle of her conversation, and her eyes followed the direction of St. Hilaire's.

There was a pause of several seconds, and for the first time in his life St. Hilaire was so ungallant as to remain oblivious to a lady at his side.

"She is graceful, is she not?" asked Mrs. Romaine carelessly.

"Graceful!" echoed St. Hilaire, forgetting everything else, "she is divine!"

They were looking at a young woman who, seated a little apart from the other guests, was more attentive to the music, her dark eyes

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turned in their direction, but looking far beyond them.

"Miss Blake is a handsome girl," said Mrs. Romaine, "but somewhat eccentric."

St. Hilaire did not reply.

Then the music ceased, Livingston, at the other end of the room, crossed the floor, and, stopping before Miss Blake, leaned forward to speak to her.

St. Hilaire saw her smile, and caught the animated look which came to her eyes as she made some spirited reply.

"He knows her," he thought, and just the slightest touch of jealousy crept into his heart. "What do you mean by eccentric?" he asked, turning to Mrs. Romaine.

"She has peculiar ideas about life, so different from mine," was the reply. "Should you like to know her?"

St. Hilaire hesitated. He looked longingly across the room. "I should be very happy to be presented, but not now—some other day." For the first time in his life his courage had failed him.

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Mrs. Romaine did not press the invitation, and passed lightly to another subject; but St. Hilaire's thoughts remained behind. When next he turned his head in the direction of Katherine Blake she had gone.

Later in the evening, left to himself for a few moments, he amused himself by strolling through the rooms.

He entered an ante-chamber which was lighted by a Venetian lamp swung from the ceiling. In one corner stood a figure clad in a full set of mail, while upon the wall were pieces of armor and weapons of mediæval warfare. The room itself was a shop of curios for which Harrison Romaine had ransacked Europe.

Katherine Blake was standing by herself in one corner of this room examining the heraldic symbols on a shield which hung against the wall. St. Hilaire would have retired and left her undisturbed, if at the sound of his footfall she had not spoken. "Where do you suppose they picked up that coat-of-arms?"

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As this remark could be addressed to no one but himself, St. Hilaire answered: "It is perhaps the armorial bearing of the Romaine, yes?" Miss Blake turned with a start, saying: "I beg your pardon! I thought it was Mr. Livingston."

"In his absence permit that I present his friend, Mistaire Bayard."

Miss Blake gave him a quick look. Two years had passed since his strange midnight adventure at Meadowlands. To the eye there was slight resemblance between the dark-bearded, travel-stained foreigner who, in spite of his apparent wickedness, had touched her sympathies, and this clean-shaven, well-dressed man who stood before her waiting for her to speak.

"The Romaine arms hardly extend as far back as that," she said, with a laugh.

"No?" he queried, approaching and looking at it more closely. "That is the period of the Third Crusade, and was the shield of a knight. See the *leopard rampant, la gueule ouverte* on a *champs vert*. See the imprint of

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the sword, where the good knight defended himself from the attack of his enemy."

Again she started, and looked at him with perplexity. "It seems to me as if I had met you somewhere before. It seems as if I had known you."

"It seems to me also that I had known you," replied St. Hilaire slowly.

"The very first moment you spoke, your voice recalled to me—not Paris, but, I cannot think what. The turn of your head, your gesture, remind me of some one—oh, I cannot think who. Don't you remember having met me somewhere? Can't you help me out?"

St. Hilaire looked at her wistfully. "No, I cannot tell—where. Let us say it was in some other life, some existence of very long ago, say as long ago as that old shield that hangs up there on the wall, and that neither of us has forgotten entirely the other."

"Oh yes," she laughed; "at the time of the crusades. Did you have ancestors in the crusades?"

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"I think so, perhaps," he replied, smiling.

"Oh, but I really never had any ancestors, so I fear it couldn't have been then."

"The American princess nevaire needs any old ancestors," he said gallantly.

"Tell me about yours," she demanded.

"I had an ancestor once, a long time ago," he replied, laughingly.

"I know; but tell me what he did that was grand or beautiful. Was he a true knight? Did he protect the weak? Did he give alms to the poor, and did he redress the wrongs of the oppressed?"

"He fortified a château, and when the rich burghers passed he descended upon them and relieved them of their purses."

"A robber baron—how very interesting."

"He gave back a little to the poor and a little to the church, and kept most for himself. The King tried to catch him to hang him up."

"The King was doubtless the worse of the two, and wanted to rob the burghers himself,"

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said Katherine. "Go on, what else did he do?"

"He became very sick, and he suffered pains of illness which he considered the pangs of remorse, so when he recovered he made atonement for his sins by going to the Holy Land and presenting the Bible to the Saracen upon the point of the sword. Then he died, highly honored and respected."

Katherine laughed. "And now we come down to you."

"I am just Mistaire Bayard, who came to your country to seek his fortune and did not find it."

"You have not found it yet, but you will; fortunes are not made in a day."

St. Hilaire shook his head. "I fear not—the fortune I desire most of all is too great that I should hope to win her—it."

Katherine laughed. "You must have a faint heart to despair so early in life. Here is my father, he can tell you how fortunes are made better than I."

Zachary Blake entered the room with an

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energetic step. "Now, daughter, I've been looking for you for some time. Are you not ready to go?"

"Father, let me introduce a friend of Mr. Livingston's, Mr. Bayard, who can tell you many interesting things."

"I am pleased to know you, sir. Can you tell me how long it takes a young woman to get on her bonnet and shawl, cloak and hat, *man-toc, chap-pew*; whatever you call them these days?"

"I meant that Mr. Bayard could tell you about the things in this room, father—the old tapestries, the antiques and curios."

"It's the present which interests me," replied Blake, "the antics of the stock market keep me so busy I have no time for the antiques of the past."

"Good-night, Mr. Bayard," said Katherine, holding out her hand. "I hope when we meet again, we shall remember each other."

"I shall nevaire forget Miss Blake. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XII

IN the morning the first thing St. Hilaire saw, upon looking out of the window across the green lawn to the ocean, was Katherine Blake riding over the beach. She urged her horse to a gallop on the hard sand, keeping close to the sea. The wind blew her hair, and the horse splashed her face with the spray from the tide. She threw back her head and laughed in pure delight.

"I must not permit myself to fall in love with her," thought St. Hilaire. "The poor Mr. Bayard must not aspire to the hand of the American princess. The pittance upon which he lives would barely pay for the gloves she wears. If he were only the Marquis de St. Hilaire! Ah that would be so different! And why not the Marquis de St. Hilaire? Why not a word in her ear? I am not a poor teacher of French, but a titled gentleman with a family tree rooted deep in the twelfth century! But a penniless nobleman, perhaps

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to be held as an adventurer and a fortune-hunter! No, she must not have the slightest opportunity to suspect my motives and to despise me. Why did I give up my fortune to my friend's sister? The lady of gold under whose roof I now am? It was for Madison, my dear friend. I must regret it. I saved his honor. And I have lost so much. I have lost the right to declare my love for the most glorious woman I have ever seen. Therefore I must not love her!"

Livingston came into the room in white ducks and a sweater, looking like a Norseman, with his light hair tossed back from his forehead.

"Bayard!" he cried breezily, "this is the finest sort of a day for a sail!"

"Thanks, Livingston my friend, it is a thing I love not, the water. I nevaire forget when I first came over. It makes me homesick just to look."

"Oh you had a rough time of it, but only look at the sea to-day. See how blue it is, with just an occasional white break on the

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crest of a wave. It is as inviting as a beautiful damsel."

"Yes, at present she smiles, but she deceives."

"Well, if you're afraid of being seasick, or lack confidence in my seamanship——"

"Enough!" interrupted St. Hilaire quickly, "I go with you. You must not think that I have fear, or that I mistrust a friend."

"Spoken like a true Bayard. You will enjoy every moment of the sail. Mrs. Romaine has driven down to the pier with a few friends, if you are ready we will walk over and join them,—a small party—Miss Blake, whom I believe you have met, and one or two others."

"I shall go with you," said St. Hilaire. "Come! I am all prepared."

After her ride on horseback, Katherine Blake had taken a plunge in the surf, and now, dressed in a white yachting suit, she stood at the helm of the sloop. Her complexion was warm with contact with air and sun; her eyes shone with the pleasure of liv-

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ing; her whole being was alert with the occupation of the moment.

"I must love her to-day," said St. Hilaire to himself as he stepped aboard. "The hazard of fortune brings us together. I may never see her after to-day, but every time I see her I shall have to love her."

"I am glad to see that you remember me this morning," said Miss Blake, holding out a hand cordially, "and I am glad that you like sailing. We are almost amphibious down here, and go out in all kinds of weather."

The more St. Hilaire looked at the radiant nautical vision, the more reconciled he felt to the ocean, and he replied quite truthfully: "I feel as if the sea was my home. I could sail on it forever in this beautiful boat."

There was a steady breeze, and the yacht skimmed out to sea until the land lay a shadowy line along the horizon. Mrs. Romaine and her guests, Miss Gladys Peacock and Templeton Tuxedo, laughed and talked with incessant gayety, but St. Hilaire was per-

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fectly content to be silent and watch Miss Blake steer.

"The wind is freshening, better let me take the wheel, Miss Blake," said Livingston.

She shook her head. "Not yet, Mr. Livingston, I can still handle her in this breeze." And she brought the craft about for the voyage home.

The sloop dipped her nose into the white-capped waves and sent the salt spray flying over the deck. With shrill cries Mrs. Romaine and Miss Peacock took refuge in the cabin, but Katherine, wrapped to her chin in oilskins, stood at the helm with the spirit of a true sailor. St. Hilaire was already wet to the skin and his teeth were chattering with cold, but he still looked at her with admiration.

"Better go below, Bayard," said Livingston with a touch on the shoulder, "the ladies will make room for you in the cabin, and you'll be warm there."

"No," replied St. Hilaire firmly, "I stay and face—"the yacht plunged and a deluge of salt water flew into his eyes and mouth—"and

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face the tempest," he replied, choking. As soon as he got his breath he added with spirit: "You think I would go below while a lady remained on the deck?"

"We have two reefs in the main sail, but she ships a good deal of water. It's a cross sea and the wind abeam," called out Miss Blake cheerfully, dashing the spray out of her own eyes. "You had better go below and be comfortable, Mr. Bayard." And she smiled encouragingly at him.

St. Hilaire smiled back. "The sea looks cross all at once, and she gets more black each moment. I stay here."

Tightening his hold upon a rope, he stood thus for two hours, buffeted by the wind and drenched by the water, and to all entreaties that he go down into the comfortable cabin he returned the same answer: "I remain here still a little while."

When they ran into the smoother water of the harbor, the two ladies who had been sheltered in the cabin tripped forth as blythe as birds.

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Miss Peacock, who had been enjoying a nap in one of the tiny staterooms, and was feeling in the gayest of spirits, came to the stern of the boat, saying to St. Hilaire:

"I have had a most delightful time. I love it when it is rough, don't you, Mr. Bayard?"

"No," replied St. Hilaire. "I wish the sea always like the floor of a ballroom, smooth and polished."

"How extraordinary. I adore rough weather. But your true salt, like your poet, Mr. Bayard, must be born."

Miss Peacock standing in the stern, the light of the setting sun illumining her gorgeous dress, was a creature to be admired. She held in her hand a parasol of pale green silk which she had brought to shield her eyes from the glare of the water, and to match her dress, which was pale green with a billowy profusion of white lace, like the foam of the sea. She opened the green parasol and held it behind her head. "I feel that I was born of the sea, Mr. Bayard, I feel as if I was part of it and belonged to it. I love it in all its

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moods; when it is gray and angry, or soft and smiling. I feel as if I could float over its waves, resting on its undulating bosom like a seabird with furled wings; then rising the next instant to skim and skim——"

There was a scream of fright, as the yacht rolled in swinging up to her moorings, and gently dropped Miss Peacock into the water with a splash.

The other men were busy with the sail. St. Hilaire gave them one look over his shoulder, and shouted, then sprang into the water after Miss Peacock who, frantically clutching the green parasol, was being swiftly borne away.

So strongly was the ebb-tide running that the most expert swimmer would have stood a precarious chance in attempting the rescue of the unfortunate Miss Peacock. St. Hilaire had not taken a dozen strokes before he became aware of the danger that she might be swept away before he could reach her, and if he should succeed in getting to her, he realized the magnitude of the task of swimming

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back with such a burden against the tide. Livingston and Tuxedo were both hidden by the sail which came creaking down, drowning the cries for help. Katherine Blake alone saw the accident. Instantly she jumped into a skiff which was moored by the yacht's side, cast off the rope, and seizing the oars rowed swiftly with the current. A few sharp strokes brought her up to a green parasol bobbing over the waves, and some distance beyond Gladys Peacock's head came to the surface. Katherine gave a call of encouragement, but immediately the head went under. She rowed forward, then, resting on her oars and leaning over the boat's side, looked down into the water. She saw the dark body coming up slowly. She plunged her arm into the water to the shoulder, seized Gladys by the clothing, and drew her up. With both hands she lifted her over the gunwale into the skiff. The girl fell a limp mass in the bottom of the boat. Like a flash Katherine took the oars and brought the boat up to the side of St. Hilaire. He was much spent by his exer-

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tions, but managed to lay hold of it, and to climb in over the stern. The accident had happened, and the rescue was made before those on board the yacht fully realized what had occurred.

"All well!" cried Katherine with self-possession as she rowed up alongside. "Mrs. Romaine, let us take this poor child down into the cabin and dry her out. You men, look after Mr. Bayard; I think he is all right."

"All right!" repeated St. Hilaire, who until now had been too exhausted to speak, and he helped lift Miss Peacock to the deck. Her brilliant plumage was bedraggled, but she was conscious, and soon wrapped in blankets and restored by brandy, had no sadder lot to bemoan than the loss of the sea-green parasol.

St. Hilaire appeared on deck dressed in an old suit of Livingston's. He came up to Katherine eagerly: "Miss Blake, you have saved two lives, just as if it were nothing at all. For such deeds one cannot say: 'I thank you.' For me, I can only say that,—that I

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cannot say how much I admire you when I see you so brave."

Katherine looked into his glowing face intently: "Mr. Bayard, what in the world were you thinking of when you jumped into the water? Why didn't you call out for help? Didn't you know you could not rescue her?"

"Miss Blake, I did call out very loud, but no one heard, and then I could not remain and see a lady drown all by herself."

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. ELEANOR ROMAINÉ made *grande toilette* that evening, although they were but four at dinner—herself, the ethereal Miss Slight, her companion, and the two gentlemen. She put aside all signs of mourning, and dressed herself in the colors best suited to her blond hair. So effective was the result of her adornment that neither Livingston nor St. Hilaire could repress a start of admiration as she came in upon them. During dinner she was much quieter than usual, and her large blue eyes wore an expression of pensiveness.

After dinner Livingston disappeared and Miss Slight discreetly vanished into thin air. Thus the charge of entertaining St. Hilaire devolved entirely upon the gracious widow. She was Parisian, every inch of her, in gown, in manner, in accent, for neither her birth nor her residence in America could outbalance the influence of her life in France.

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"Monsieur de St. Hilaire," she said, speaking French as usual when they were talking together, "you remember I told you I was going to surprise you."

"I am consumed with curiosity."

"When Mr. Livingston first spoke to me of you, painting your picture so vividly, it came over me like a flash: 'It is Monsieur de St. Hilaire who left Paris with such mysterious suddenness.' When a well-known Paris lawyer came recently to America and I met him, I naturally questioned him in regard to this gentleman."

"Jules Gérin is in New York?" cried St. Hilaire.

Mrs. Romaine smiled and continued. "This wise legal gentleman and myself, we put our two heads together, and thus a secret got from his old head into my young and frivolous one." Mrs. Romaine touched her bright curls caressingly.

St. Hilaire sprang to his feet. "What did he tell you?"

"He told me just what you had done, Mon-

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sieur de St. Hilaire. That my brother had ruined himself before he died, and that you ruined yourself *for me*."

St. Hilaire started and changed color. He had never thought of it in that light.

"You could do that for me?" she continued softly, and the color came to her cheeks. "I want to give you back this money, Monsieur de St. Hilaire. It is yours, not mine."

St. Hilaire stood in silence. The money was his. Why should he refuse it now that she knew the truth, and insisted upon returning it? He could take back his own and then—his heart leaped at the thought, and his joy was reflected in his eyes.

"Ah, you will take it!" she cried, seizing his hand in a transport of gratitude. "I am rich, I am so rich that it bewilders me. I want you to take all my money. I want to show him who beggared himself for me that I too can be generous. I want you to have everything. Everything I have belongs to you."

"Mrs. Romaine, you overwhelm me," stam-

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mered St. Hilaire. "You wish to repay an obligation a hundredfold, you wish to make a complete and absolute sacrifice. It is generous, it is noble magnificent. It is like a woman."

"Monsieur de St. Hilaire, it is so sweet to make restitution. I want you to take everything." Her lips trembled with emotion and there was tenderness in her voice.

"This is folly, I must not listen to it," he exclaimed.

"Why not?" she cried, with the petulancy of a child. "Tell me why not."

"How can I take your fortune? How could I justify myself in so doing? My dear Mrs. Romaine, be reasonable."

She looked at him with wonder. "I do not understand. I have never known a man like you. I was very young when I married the dissolute spendthrift Régal. I soon ceased to love him. I hate vulgarity. I despise coarseness. Then I married Harrison Romaine, the methodical, the business-like. I cannot bear method, precision jars upon me. I am

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still young. I have been twice married, but I feel that I have never loved. I, who am so full of romantic fire, have never really loved. Why do I tell you this? You are so different from them, you can understand my nature. O Raymond de St. Hilaire, you, who saw me when I was a young girl fresh from the convent-school, you might have saved me from Régal, you might have saved me!"

"As your guardian I had to give my consent to your marriage with Anatole Régal, else you would have suspected my motives."

"As a suitor you should have used your authority as guardian to prevent my marriage with Régal. Think how delightfully romantic the situation would have been. I should have declared I hated you. You could have sacrificed your fortune for me, allowing me to hear of it afterward, and then—and then I should have been spared Régal,—Romaine, and all that."

"Madame Romaine," cried St. Hilaire suddenly, "do you suspect that I told Gérin to tell you; that I was privy to his disclosures?"

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"No," she replied emphatically. "I know you were not, I found it out myself, and I have determined to make restitution."

"Gérin did wrong to tell you. What I did was for my dear friend, who was your brother. I will abide by what I did. I cannot take back what I gave him."

Eleanor Romaine held her breath with surprise. "You did it for him?" she exclaimed, 'for Stanley Madison and not *for me!*'"

"I did it for my dead friend," replied St. Hilaire, lowering his voice.

Her eyes filled with tears. St. Hilaire looked much distressed.

"You mean you won't take any of the money?" she asked pleadingly.

"I cannot; please do not urge me."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes, dried them quickly, and looked at him with a smile.

"You are actually pale, Monsieur. Come into the Japanese room and have a cup of tea. It will do us both good."

St. Hilaire followed her obediently.

"Men are strange creatures," said the beau-

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tiful widow meditatively, as she watched the rising steam, "always in love with the wrong woman. Now there is Livingston, hopelessly in love with Katherine Blake——"

"Hopelessly!" exclaimed St. Hilaire.

"Yes, there is little hope, although I think she loves him."

St. Hilaire winced. Eleanor watched him out of the corner of her eyes as she bent over the teapot. Her eyes were dry now.

"How many lumps of sugar?"

"It does not make any difference," said St. Hilaire absently.

"No woman is worth a heartache. I have given you three lumps," and she handed him the cup with a dazzling smile. "I take great interest in the love affairs of others, having none of my own. Should you like to hear about theirs?" she inquired sweetly.

"Yes, I should."

"Well, they seem to be devoted to each other. Livingston is of the best family, but with small fortune, and the Blakes think their wonderful daughter worthy to be a princess."

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"And so she is," thought St. Hilaire.

"And a certain Prince of Moravia appearing as a suitor, papa and mamma Blake favor him."

"But you said Katherine—Miss Blake, loves George Livingston."

"And so she does. She is dying of love for him, I'm sure; yet being a dutiful daughter, she does not marry without her father's consent."

"She is a girl of spirit, she is likely to marry to suit herself," said St. Hilaire.

"But there are other considerations. I said Livingston had only a small fortune, a very small fortune."

"She is an American," said St. Hilaire.

"Yes," admitted Eleanor Romaine thoughtfully, "she is an American, and the Prince of Moravia has a title."

"Bah, a little princeling like Moravia."

"But still it *is* a title," persisted Eleanor.

"Miss Blake may love George Livingston, I believe you, it is natural. He is a splendid gentleman. She would never marry Moravia,

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"I would wager my life," maintained St. Hilaire stoutly, although his heart was torn.

"I do not think she will either," replied Eleanor in a burst of frankness. "I believe Katherine is merely waiting, hoping that the Prince will tire in his attentions and that she may then obtain the parental blessing to her match with Livingston—and some of the parental dollars."

St. Hilaire was thoughtful.

"You see, my dear Marquis de St. Hilaire, all American girls are not quite so romantic as—as I am."

"And if the Prince of Moravia were out of the way, you say that Blake would give his consent and a dowry, and that Miss Blake would be happy."

"I said, I thought she might persuade him to. Let me refill your cup. But you see the prince maintains an ardent suit. You saw how attentive to her he was at my musical."

"I saw George Livingston, but not the other."

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"What, you did not see Moravia with his broad chest covered with medals?"

"No."

"Where were your eyes if they did not see that large, bald man with a turned-up mustache, an aristocratic bearing, and a monocle?"

"I did not see him, but that could not have been Moravia," said St. Hilaire quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"The Prince of Moravia is a small man with dark eyes and all his hair."

"This is interesting," cried Mrs. Romaine.

"Then you knew Moravia?"

"Some years ago. Of course he may have died."

"Oh, then this may be his successor."

"Possibly. I did not see him last evening, but from your description I feel sure it is not the Prince of Moravia whom I once knew."

"This is delightfully mysterious," cried Mrs. Romaine. "Come sit beside me and tell me more."

When George Livingston returned St. Hi-

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laire looked at him almost enviously. "Of course she loves him," he said to himself. "He is magnificent. She is the most glorious creature in the world. They are fitly matched." He sighed, and turned to say good-night to Mrs. Romaine:

"We go back to the city early to-morrow. Good-night, and thank you for your hospitality."

"You must come again and often; 'This house is yours,' as the Spanish say. You will come whenever you want a confidant, Raymond de St. Hilaire," she added in a low tone.

CHAPTER XIV

It was only recently that Mrs. Blake had gotten into the social swim. For many years she had hovered about the edge, admiring its glittering current, now and then getting a little dash of its spray, and ardently longing to get into the full swing of the tide. When Blake made money in the traction companies and became a power in the business world, his wife's opportunity came, and she plunged in boldly.

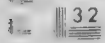
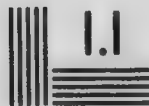
Once in she was there to stay, and when she gave a reception, a dinner, or a dance, no more brilliant function enlightened the social firmament than Mrs. Zachary Blake's.

When she found that the star of fashion, Mrs. Harrison Romaine, had instituted a Wednesday Morning Class for dalliance with contemporaneous French drama, and had put it under the supervision of a young French gentleman of distinguished appearance, this



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energetic lady immediately laid her plans for the formation of a Friday Afternoon Club to make the acquaintance of the French classic drama, and she graciously requested the same gentleman to take charge of the affair. She never knew how long St. Hilaire hesitated before he decided to preside over the meetings of these interesting dilettanti, nor did she know how important to her own immediate circle was his decision. St. Hilaire finally yielded to what seemed like destiny, but what really was the temptation to see Katherine Blake.

"I want to peruse all the old French dramatists: Fénelon, Rabelais, Paul de Kock, Molière, and Labiche," Mrs. Blake explained, "taking up one each week and running them through the season. Then, if they give out, we can take up some of the moderns. What do you think of that plan, Mr. Bayard?"

St. Hilaire smiled politely and made a judicious choice of subjects. He was so attentive to his work and so quiet in manner that Mrs.

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Blake became loud in his praise, commending particularly his modest demeanor and his tactful knowledge of his place.

So St. Hilaire had an opportunity to see Miss Blake one hour every week, and true to his prophecy he loved her every time he saw her; but he also loved her every other hour in the week as well. And the hour that he did pass in her presence was both his joy and his despair. She treated him with such consideration; she was so extremely attentive to his every word; and with every transport which her kindness gave him there came a shaft in the thought that her heart had been given to another man, and that for him, St. Hilaire, it was mere kindness.

He was most careful never to permit himself to misinterpret to his own advantage any word or look of hers, and was perhaps a little more reserved than he intended or circumstances demanded. As time wore on she, on her part, became somewhat silent and reserved, and he interpreted the shadow, which he thought he sometimes saw upon her face,

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to be the reflection of her own unhappy love affair.

At last existence became so unendurable among these twisted threads of life that he suddenly resolved to break them by going away. But before he went he decided to see the illustrious prince who had so bewitched the honest Blakes as to cause them to tilt their noses at a marriage with a Livingston.

The Prince of Moravia had his residence at one of the large hotels. He lived there quietly enough in two rooms, as one who, secure of his position, seeks comfort rather than ostentatious display. The prince's means were sufficient for his present needs, and for the future, that gentleman with a thrifty eye was making provision.

One morning in the neighborhood of ten o'clock, he sat at his writing-table, a coffee-cup at his elbow, and a cigarette between his fingers, while he busied himself with his letters. Although the hour was early he had disposed of a considerable amount of the morning's mail, drinking black coffee as he

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worked, his large form comfortably wrapped in a dressing-gown of Japanese silk. His face was freshly shaven, and the few hairs which still clung to his head were parted with mathematical precision and plastered to his bald crown. His correspondence afforded him considerable satisfaction. Its general tenor was notes of invitation, which he answered with method, and then filed away with regularity. When he had finished the reply to the last of these epistles, he took up, one after another, several newspapers devoted to the chronicles of society, and read them carefully, occasionally stopping to jot down a note or two, or to refer to a formidable-looking volume of mercantile agency reports which, when not in use, was kept under lock and key. While he was thus pleasantly employed his valet entered the room. Although the prince lived in a very modest and unassuming manner, and was a man of considerable energy, well used to helping himself, a body-servant was a necessity, and he always kept a man.

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The prince looked up, put his monocle to his eye, rather from force of habit than because it afforded him any clearer vision, and said interrogatively, "Well?"

The servant noiselessly put before him a silver tray upon which was a card. "Mr. Jean Bayard," read the prince. "I do not know him. Tell him so, and let him make his business known to you." The prince was most particular as to whom he included among his acquaintances. He had no desire to cheapen either himself or other princes.

"He says he wants to see you personally," said the valet returning.

"Impossible," replied the imperturbable Moravia, and resumed his work. His man withdrew.

St. Hilaire pushed in past the servant. "Your pardon, Prince of Moravia."

"Sir, this is an intrusion!" The prince flushed angrily, rose from his chair, at the same time closing the agency book and dropping a newspaper over it.

"It is. I am very sorry," said St. Hilaire

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softly, "but I want to ask some little questions."

"Are you a newspaper reporter?" inquired the prince, preparing to be somewhat mollified.

"No."

The prince looked at St. Hilaire closely: "Who the deuce are you?"

St. Hilaire looked calmly at the prince: "I am a teacher of French."

"Sir, you are impertinent. I do not care for any lessons in languages. I can speak French as well as English or German."

"I come to learn, not to teach."

"Leave my rooms, sir, I do not wish to know you."

"I wish to know you," said St. Hilaire coolly. "I wish to know how you obtained your title."

"You are insulting, sir."

St. Hilaire sat down in an armchair.

The prince suddenly restrained his rising temper.

"It is useless to talk to you. I do not wish

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to have any disturbance with you. I am going out in my motor. You may remain—my valet will see that you do not steal anything."

The prince threw off his dressing-gown, and ignoring the presence of St. Hilaire, put on his automobile coat and cap, and adjusted the large goggles.

"Now, sir," he began, turning toward his unwelcome guest, "I leave you to——"

St. Hilaire sprang to his feet with a cry of satisfaction: "The chauffeur of the Prince of Moravia!"

"What do you mean?" cried the prince angrily.

"Sit down!" commanded St. Hilaire abruptly.

The prince hesitated, and obeyed.

"Leave your goggles on. In this case the mask discovered you. You have forgotten being the chauffeur for the prince?"

"Who the devil are you?" asked the prince, his hand shaking either with excitement or fear.



"Sit down," commanded St. Hilaire

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"Never mind who I am, prince of chauffeurs!"

"Call me Prince of Moravia," was the reply.

"I shall call you chauffeur," answered St. Hilaire, with the suggestion of a smile on his lips, "and you must answer to it every time."

"If you will call me Prince of Moravia for only six months I will reward you generously."

St. Hilaire was silent.

"Call me Prince of Moravia for six little months, and you shall have,"—the prince narrowed his eyes, and looked at St. Hilaire,—"three thousand dollars."

St. Hilaire laughed. "You impudent fellow, you enjoy being a prince?"

"I am awaiting your reply," answered the other insinuatingly.

"Where did you get the money to live in this fine manner?" demanded St. Hilaire suddenly.

"That is my affair."

"And the affair of the Prince of Moravia, and of the police too, perhaps, and I shall make it my affair."

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"Listen, Mr. Bayard, or whatever your name may be," said the prince, dropping his air of assurance and speaking rapidly, "this has become merely a question of money between us. Now I feel sure you're a little down on your luck, but I don't ask any embarrassing questions of you. I'll come right down to business, I'll give you ten thousand dollars if you'll keep quiet. I won't even call what you are doing blackmail. All I want is to live quietly and not have any talk."

"I don't believe you have so much money."

"But I shall have it. If at the end of six months I am not in a position to pay, then you may talk as much as you wish; meanwhile you lose nothing by waiting."

"I shall not wait," was the reply.

"But you don't understand. Isn't it enough? I might increase it a little. There are several heiresses here who seem to look with more or less favor upon me, but there is one in particular whom I——"

"Silence," cried St. Hilaire in a voice which made the other jump, "I shall send a little

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telegraphic despatch to the Prince of Moravia. You shall be exposed pretty quick. It is finished with you."

The prince turned white. "You can't harm me. I've been over here a long time and I've done nothing wrong."

"We shall see," said St. Hilaire significantly.

"Well, I'm as good a man as the Prince of Moravia, anyway—I can speak three languages fluently, and that is more than he can do. I go to bed sober every night, and that is more than he can say——"

"That is enough,—come with me!" said St. Hilaire.

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to see if you are still a chauffeur of experience. I am going to hire a motor and you shall conduct it."

"Never! I will not obey you."

"Yes, you will conduct it, or you will be exposed now!"

The morning was a bright one, and the world of society in which the Prince of Mora-

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via had shone was taking advantage of the weather.

"You will see nobody," commanded St. Hilaire. "Sit erect, look neither to right nor left. If any one speaks to you, you reply: 'I am a counterfeit prince,' not another word. Now *chauffez*."

"Where do you wish to go?"

"Up the avenue."

"To the Park?"

"No, it is too early. Not so fast as that. Keep within the limit of speed. Good. Now slowly."

As the automobile drew up to the curb, Mrs. Blake, looking buxomly handsome, rosy and good-tempered, swept out of a shop toward her carriage. She gave a smile and would have stopped to exchange a few words with the prince. He did not notice her. St. Hilaire bowed.

Mrs. Blake looked at them in astonishment. She was too much surprised to see St. Hilaire, and deeply hurt by the affront put upon her by the prince, she hurried into her carriage.

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"Now we will go to the hotel, and you shall write a letter to Mr. Blake. You shall tell him you are going to leave the city forever."

"And then?" demanded the "prince" surlily.

"Then you shall go as fast as you can, and as far as you like."

The "prince's" eyes shone resentfully under his dark glasses, but he looked neither to right nor left, and they sped rapidly back to the hotel.

"I will drop the letter in the mail myself," said St. Hilaire. "After that you may say good-by—and go."

"I do not understand it at all," said Mrs. Blake, as she passed the Prince of Moravia's letter over to her husband the next morning. "He writes a short letter to say he is going away for good. Yesterday his manner was most strange; it was insulting."

"He's a cad," cried Blake. "We're well rid of him."

"I always thought him such a gentleman," continued Mrs. Blake. "I felt sure for a

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nobleman he had led a very clean life. We never heard he had been caught cheating at cards or anything like that."

"He's a cad," reiterated Blake, walking up and down the floor shaking his head. "He has heard how I got pinched in Amalgamated and throws us over. I'm done with your princes," he burst out still more savagely, tearing the letter into small pieces. "An American is good enough for me. Katherine shall marry the man of her own choice."

"I had invited the Prince of Moravia to our big dinner party," sighed Mrs. Blake, "and now I'll have to find some one to fill his place at the table."

CHAPTER XV

WHEN Mrs. Blake struck the Prince of Moravia off her list with a vicious cut of the pen, she needed in an emergency some one to take his place at a dinner. In answer to a sudden prompting of her mind a card was despatched to Mr. Jean Bayard, and found its way to St. Hilaire in his small apartment near the roof.

Although he had fully decided that he was to go away for good and all, he could not resist the temptation to accept this first and last invitation to the home of Katherine Blake, and sent his reply with a feeling of sadness not unmixed with alacrity.

When the day arrived, and the hour of the dinner-party approached, St. Hilaire set out on foot for the house where he was to dine. The fall evening was damp and foggy, and he went rapidly up to the avenue. All of a sudden a face among the many which passed by him aroused his interest. He was going at

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such a rapid gait up the street, and the owner of the face was coming so swiftly down, that they passed each other in the crowd like two ships in a fog, and it was not until they were already out of hailing distance that the familiarity of the face struck St. Hilaire. He looked quickly over his shoulder and saw the square figure and the slim waist of a dapperly dressed man disappearing in the mist. St. Hilaire turned around, and navigating his way through the crowd, kept his eyes on the trim-fitting coat. He followed thus for several blocks, until the figure suddenly left the sidewalk and disappeared through a doorway. It was a shabby building, once a handsome private residence, but long since given over to business, and had become a veritable rabbit-warren of many tenants engaged in all sorts of trades and occupations, from the clairvoyant who read the future in the stars, to the "promoter of enterprises" whose methods were equally nebulous.

On the first floor hung the brass sign of a private detective agency with a half-closed eye,

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and an expression diabolically knowing and suspicious. On the top floor was an establishment for beautifying the human form. Stout figures were made gracefully slender. Figures to whom nature had been niggardly were increased to any size their possessor desired. Bad complexions were made clear, and good complexions were made enduring. In this hive of heterogeneous activity St. Hilaire plunged quickly and entered a dingy elevator operated by a slender youth with a pale anæmic countenance.

"What floor, sir?" demanded the boy mechanically, as the elevator began a wheezy ascent.

St. Hilaire hesitated and in an undecided tone replied: "The top."

"Black eyes painted; noses built up; hair made to grow on lip, chin and bald heads, or removed from any part of the body," said the boy in a sing-song voice.

As they went by the third floor, St. Hilaire, his faculties on the *qui-vive*, looking through the iron work which encased the elevator,

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over the open transom of a door saw a slim, white hand lovingly caressing a blond mustache.

"I get out here," said St. Hilaire at the next landing, and ran quickly down one flight of stairs.

He paused for a moment in front of the door. A woman's voice came to him over the transom.

"I cannot do it. I cannot. I beg of you to give it up."

It was the voice of Rose Goudet.

"You must," replied a man's voice. "How can we two men take care of the child? You have got to. Do not stand crying there. Go into the other room if you must weep. I don't want to see you." The woman evidently obeyed with docility, and there was silence.

St. Hilaire knocked. There was no response. He tried the door. It was locked. He could hear some one moving within and knew that it was Zavanno.

Again he struck the door sharply.

"Who is it?" was the querulous question.

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"A telegraphic despatch, sir," said St. Hilaire, disguising his voice.

"Put it under the door."

St. Hilaire shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and looked at his watch. "I shall be late to dinner!" he exclaimed to himself in consternation, and hurrying from the building he hailed a passing cab, and was driven rapidly to keep his engagement.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT it was to be a very large dinner-party St. Hilaire saw from the array of hats and coats in the gentlemen's dressing-room. "I shall only see and adore her from a great distance," he thought as he stepped out into the hallway.

A little girl skurrying upstairs to the nursery ran against his legs.

"What is it?" exclaimed St. Hilarie, catching her up quickly to prevent her falling. "*Oh, le bel enfant!*" he cried with delight as he held her.

The child laughed. "Throw me up high and catch me," she commanded.

St. Hilaire obeyed.

"Higher!"

St. Hilaire tossed her high into the air and caught her as she came down.

"Do you know me, little one?" he asked, putting her upon her feet.

She looked up into his face. "Yes," she replied slowly, "I know you."

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"You remember where you saw me the first time, yes?"

She shook her head, pushing a lock of hair out of her eyes. "No."

"You said to me: 'I love you,' do you forget?" he said wistfully.

"Oh, I do love you," she cried; "toss me up high, it is such fun."

St. Hilaire kissed her and tossed her into the air, and every time she came down into his arms she laughed and commanded, "Higher, higher!" and St. Hilaire obeyed, and rumped his shirt front sadly.

He set her on her feet. "I must go down the stairs now, *bel enfant*, and you must to bed."

"No," she declared firmly, "I am going upstairs, but not to bed yet. They are having a party downstairs. I want you to stay up and play with me."

"I cannot, I must go to the big party."

"But I want you to. You look just like Lawrence and he's awfully nice."

"Who is Lawrence?"

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"He runs the elevator at papa's office."

St. Hilaire laughed. "And you, how do you call yourself?"

"I don't call myself. I'm always being called."

"I mean to say, what is your name?"

"My name is Miss Chrystal Hartley Blake, but everybody who loves me calls me Chrystal."

"Good-night, beautiful little Chrystal," called St. Hilaire, as the pretty little creature ran upstairs, waving her hand through the banisters.

"She is coquette, just like all her sex," he said, smiling to himself as she disappeared. To his dismay he discovered the havoc the play had wrought with his linen. His shirt-bosom, usually so immaculate, bore the imprint of five moist little fingers; his collar had parted company with his shirt, and both ends were flaring wide. The fastidious St. Hilaire, leaning ruefully over the banisters, could see the soft-footed butler coming down the hallway to announce dinner.

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"Hist!"

Clavers raised his head.

"One little moment, I beg of you. Mount the stairs."

The dignified butler, showing no surprise at the sight of the flushed face of St. Hilaire looking down over the railing, came quietly up to him.

"I have lost a little villain collar-button. I am in despair."

"I can fix that in a minute, sir. I have a supply on hand."

St. Hilaire's face brightened.

"Here, let me take a look sir. Your shirt's staring open in front sir, there's a stud missing also, but I'll fix you up presentable."

Clavers' hands flew to adjust the disorder, when the button slipped through his fingers and he stepped back as if bitten by a snake. St. Hilaire in his hurry did not notice the man's pale face nor his trembling legs.

"Here, let me," he cried impatiently, "you have lost it also," and he dropped upon his knees to find the elusive button.

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"Thank the heavens I find it again!" he exclaimed with relief, getting upon his feet. The butler had disappeared. St. Hilaire adjusted his collar and tie as best he could, and hurried downstairs.

Clavers, with a face like chalk, stood at the door of the drawing-room. He hesitated as St. Hilaire passed him, and agitated, as if by some deep emotion, followed St. Hilaire into the room.

"Clavers," said Mrs. Blake in a low tone, as she came forward. "Is not dinner served?"

"Dinner is served," he answered with a gulp.

A few minutes later St. Hilaire was seated at the long table. Fate had placed him as far as possible from Katherine Blake, in compensation giving him the pleasure of listening to the conversation of her voluble mamma.

Mrs. Blake's new black velvet was a wonderful achievement of the dressmaker's art. She was rather more than a fine figure of a woman, and her white shoulders emerging with suddenness from her bodice, suggested

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the fear that she was on the point of boiling over.

Mrs. Blake should have been supremely happy. Her gown, although it was so tight as to make her short of breath, was an artistic success and cost a prodigious sum. Her dinner was deliciously cooked, and had cost another prodigious sum, and upon her right hand sat the society favorite and cotillon leader, Remington Tuxedo. Of course he was not equal to a prince who wore all the orders of Moravia on his evening-coat, and a monocle in one of his aristocratic eyes, but Tuxedo had travelled all over the world, carried himself with an air of distinction, and could boast of a decoration by the Khan of Tartary. Mrs. Blake would have been supremely happy but for one alarming incident. Clavers, the precise, the religiously punctilious, the mathematically accurate, who could be counted upon to a nicety, and who up to the present moment had never failed or faltered, was under the influence of alcohol. Nothing but an over-indulgence in strong

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drink could account for his behavior. Twice had he spilt drops of claret upon the tablecloth; once had he come dangerously near the sacred head of the cotillon leader with a plate of soup, while his eyes were fixed upon the farther end of the table. After each remove this extraordinary butler counted the silver with an expression of countenance which defied interpretation. Mrs. Blake closed her full lips, while a light of determination shone in her eyes, and she tried to control herself until the hour of explanation.

After dinner, Mr. Zachary Blake, fatigued with the very success of the entertainment, sought a few moments' respite with an old pipe and a smoking-jacket in his own room. He was followed immediately by Clavers. The butler was laboring under intense suppressed excitement, and the hand which pulled at his waistcoat trembled.

"Mr. Blake, are you aware, sir, that there is a burglar in the house?" There was a tremor in his voice, although he tried to speak with his usual impressiveness.

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"You mean a burglar-alarm, don't you, Clavers?" replied Blake, taking off his dress-coat and tossing it carelessly over a chair.

"No, sir, I do not mean a burglar-alarm."

"What in the dickens do you mean, then?" asked Mr. Blake, removing his patent leather shoes with a sigh of relief. "Here, hand me those slippers, will you?"

Clavers complied with the request with dignity. When Mr. Blake had drawn on the comfortable slippers and reached out a hand for his pipe, Clavers drew himself up and said dramatically:

"I mean to ask you, sir, whether you are aware that at your table I have been serving to-night one of the most desperate characters this century has ever produced?"

Blake looked at his servant reproachfully.

"I've always allowed you to be the custodian of the wine-cellar, Clavers, because I thought you never drank; bring me the keys to-morrow."

Clavers gave a gulp and burst forth:

"Mr. Blake, do you forget when your place

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at Meadowlands was broke into? Can you forget the pistol-shooting, Mrs. Blake in hysterics and yourself a raging lion, sir? Do you forget the tracks in the garden, the pool of blood by the fish-pond, and—and the villain that did all this has been eating at your table to-night! He has had the handling of your silver. It was all I could help doing to keep from denouncing him, and it was only out of respect for your feelings and the scandal that would come of it which held me in."

"What on earth?" ejaculated Mr. Blake.

"It's the Frenchman, sir, and he's sitting in the library now talking to Miss Katherine."

"Do you mean to tell me that you are talking about that Frenchman, that nice-looking fellow who is a friend of Mr. Livingston and indorsed by Mrs. Romaine; who doesn't do anything worse than teach French verbs and read French plays to ladies in the afternoon; do you mean to tell me you suspect him of being a burglar? Clavers, you've been—you're dreaming, Clavers."

"I know he is a criminal." Clavers almost

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raised his voice. "He's grown prosperous and wears fine clothes, but I could pick him out of ten thousand."

"Clavers, hand me the matches."

The butler passed the match box. Mr. Blake lit his pipe. Clavers leaned forward and whispered: "I have got the *absolutely* kind of proof."

"Well?"

"Ask him to take off his shirt."

"What has he got under his shirt?"

"He has a scar just below the throat. I saw it to-night in the dressing-room. The man who tried to rob and murder us in our beds had the same scar, sir. I saw him without his shirt."

Mr. Blake rose and walked up and down the room, puffing rapidly. "Absurd."

"Ask him to open his shirt front, that's all I ask, sir," repeated Clavers; "if he hasn't got a scar just as I say, if I can't identify him as the desperate criminal, then send me to jail, sir, as the robber. That's all I say, sir, send me in his place. I'd want to stay there."

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Mr. Blake drew on his shoes and resumed his black coat. Clavers continued talking glibly: "Yes, sir; and he's the same party who had already been arrested in the village for *felinous* assault upon the police. I suspicioned him that very afternoon, as soon as I laid eyes upon him with his 'I do not understand' English.' A man who can't or won't understand what you're saying to him is a man you've got to watch. He isn't so very big, but he's a fighter, sir. Shall I go out and summon in two or three policemen, sir?"

"Clavers!" said Mr. Blake, walking slowly from the room, "when I ring for you come into the library."

"Yes, sir."

CHAPTER XVII

IN the library St. Hilaire and Katherine Blake were standing before a book-case.

"Here is a book," she said, "that I want you to read. Apart from the interest of the theme and the charm of style, the reading of it will help you in your study of English. You see," she added laughingly, "you are spending much time and hard work in trying to improve my French; I wish to turn the tables upon you."

St. Hilaire took the volume, held it for a moment in his hand, and then returned it to her, saying:

"I should like very much to read the books you like, but I study English no more. I am going away."

The book fell to the floor.

"Pardon, Miss Blake." St. Hilaire stooped and picked it up.

"Do you mean to say you are going to give up and go away—for good?"

"Miss Blake, I have failed in everything.

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I came here to this country first with a little money. I intended to embark in a grand scheme. I saw myself the owner of many acres and many herds of cattle. It is perhaps not so great in your eyes, but it was my ambition and I failed. Then I had one other ambition. No, it was just a dream, but a dream for the realization of which I still long, hopelessly, every day. I can bear it no more. I am going."

"And you give up, beaten? Oh, Mr. Bayard, how can you? If I had an aspiration which was worth fighting for I would not give up so easily; I would not yield until no shadow of a hope remained of my dream being realized."

"There is no hope left. I myself have dispelled the last shadow of hope," answered St. Hilaire.

"You are not the best judge of that; you are discouraged and are giving up too soon. I wish you would reconsider it."

He looked into her face wistfully. "I cannot. It is too hard to stay here now."

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She put the book slowly back in its place. "Where are you going? What are you going to do?" she asked slowly.

"I know not."

"Mr. Bayard, I am deeply disappointed in you. Just because you think you have failed, you give up important and valuable work and run away. I have no patience with you. It is because I thought so much better of you that I have less patience with you," and she turned away from him.

St. Hilaire started with surprise.

"Valuable and important work," he repeated. "I have never thought of it like that. I have only considered it a means to live, and to be near——"

"I consider it work of importance to teach me," she said, turning to him with a smile. "I am selfish enough to wish you to keep at it."

"If I had thought that you cared," he cried; "if I had thought that you needed me."

"Will you reconsider?" she asked earnestly, putting her hand on his arm. "Will

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you really think of staying? I do need you."

St. Hilaire stopped short. "Ah no, it is not possible. It is imperative that I go. You cannot need me. You have Mistaire Livingston. It is all right now. You will find out soon."

"What has Mr. Livingston got to do with it? I want you to stay here and go on with your work. Mr. Livingston can go where he chooses."

St. Hilaire caught her hand. "Miss Blake, say that again."

"Say what again?" she inquired.

"Mistaire Livingston, he can go where he chooses."

"*Mis-taire* Livingston, he can go where he chooses," she repeated, laughing. "Why shouldn't he?" she asked, opening her eyes.

"Miss Blake, I do not understand," cried St. Hilaire. "I do not ask to understand, but I stay, for it is your wish. Whatever is your desire, I obey."

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There was a brilliant color in her cheeks, as she looked intently into his face.

"Time and time again it comes over me that I have known you before," she said. "I can never explain it, but the feeling is so strong that somewhere we have known each other. Do you ever have such a feeling about people?"

St. Hilaire walked once up and down the floor, then turned and faced her.

"Miss Blake, there is something I must now tell you. If I had gone it was of little consequence, but now it is different." He stopped short.

"Well, go on."

"It is very hard to say."

"It must be, from the difficulty you make of it."

"It is very difficult, but I must tell you. You will believe in me whatever I may tell?"

"How mysterious! Why, of course, I shall always believe in you."

"Miss Blake," he exclaimed suddenly, "please look at me hard."

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She turned her bright face toward him.

"You are looking at me just as hard as you can?"

"I am looking at you with all my might."

"But you laugh; why do you laugh?"

"I can't help it. I feel like laughing when you look so solemn."

"Look at me hard, and tell me what you see."

She looked at him critically from head to foot. She saw a handsome young man, whose evening-clothes fitted him to perfection. She noticed that his shirt bosom was rumpled, and bore a tiny smudge; and his necktie was a little on one side. She did not see any sign of vanity in his attitude, but an expression of deep concern in his flushed, earnest face.

"What do you see?"

A puzzled smile came to her lips. "I do not quite understand. I see *you*, Mr. Bayard."

"You do not see a poor man, sick, hungry, fatigued, to whom you gave food and shelter. A man with a thin face covered with a beard."

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Katherine turned pale. "Mr. Bayard! Impossible!"

"It was a very long time since. He has perhaps changed very much?"

"It was *you*?" she cried. "You! Impossible! Oh, Mr. Bayard!"

"You would nevaire have known unless I told you?" he inquired.

"Sometimes the thought has come to me that you reminded me of him, but I have always dismissed it as utterly impossible."

"Miss Blake, you do not think,—you do not still think that I tried to rob you that night?" St. Hilaire asked in agitation.

She was very pale, and St. Hilaire noticed that she trembled as she faltered out: "The — man — turned and fired back into the room."

St. Hilaire turned paler than the woman.

"Miss Blake! What do you mean?"

"Two shots were fired, one of them—hit me."

St. Hilaire could not speak, he trembled like a leaf as she continued.

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"It merely grazed my shoulder and did not hurt me, though it upset the whole household and prevented all thought of pursuit. So the man escaped."

She spoke very calmly, and each word made St. Hilaire shrink as if in pain.

"Miss Blake, you tear my heart. You think it was me? It was that Blinky. Oh, why did I not kill him myself!" St. Hilaire walked up and down the floor. "Miss Blake, she thinks I shot her. I, who would prefer to blow off my head rather than lift one little finger against her."

His anguish was so genuine it was hard to look at him and not pity him.

"What if hunted, shot at, wounded, you had turned and fired, not at me, but back into the darkness to frighten your pursuers, should I blame you too severely?" She spoke as if pleading his case.

"I would have let myself be shot in little pieces before I would have endangered you; but I could not shoot, for I had no weapon. I heard shots, but the bullets came not near me."

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"You were not wounded?" she inquired incredulously.

"No."

"Why, the footprints were traced across the garden to the pond, where drops of blood were found."

St. Hilaire laughed nervously. "It was not my blood. I ran across the lawn on the road. The robbaire must have hid by the little lake. He was hit, and in his pain and rage turned and fired. Don't you understand, Miss Blake, don't you believe me?"

"I do understand it all now. I do believe you, Mr. Bayard." She held out her hand.

"Miss Blake," he cried, "you have a noble heart to believe in me with no other proof than what I myself tell you."

"I know you speak the truth," she answered. "Mr. Bayard, I cannot doubt you."

"Miss Blake, I must tell you this. You were good to me when all the world looked dark. I did then hate your country, but one word of kindness from you changed my heart in an instant. I had found only the false, the

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vile, the brutal, when all at once you showed me the good, the pure, the generous, and now I love your country." He paused. "I love it with my whole heart, my whole soul—Miss Blake," and he put her hand to his lips. "Ah, Miss Blake, the joy of finding that you do not suspect me. It was the fear that you might doubt me which kept me from telling you before. It was that which made me a coward, yes, Miss Blake, a coward."

She was silent for a few moments. "Mr. Bayard, I want to ask a favor of you. I want you to let me tell my father about this affair,—your adventure at Meadowlands, just as you have told it to me."

"Certainly, Miss Blake, it shall be as you desire."

"I can explain matters to father so much better than you."

CHAPTER XVIII

ZACHARY BLAKE entered the library. As his hand was on the door his ear had caught the words: "I can explain matters to father so much better than you." He bent a penetrating glance upon the two, and a thought flashed through his mind which made him start as if struck.

St. Hilaire bowed to him politely.

"Katherine, I wish to have a few moments alone with this gentleman," said Mr. Blake.

Katherine looked at her father, hesitated for a moment; saw the lines deepen about the stern mouth, and without a word left them together.

"Take a seat, Mr. Bayard."

St. Hilaire waited until the elder man had settled back in one of the leather chairs, before he sat down.

Blake pushed back into the shadow where he could watch St. Hilaire's face. The latter looked at him with surprise, but with per-

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fect composure, and waited for him to begin.

Blake ran his hand over his short, iron-gray beard. It was not easy to begin.

"Mr. Bayard, I want to ask you a few questions. They are not prompted by idle curiosity. My method is direct, straight from the shoulder, and I look for the same from you."

"I attend you, sir," and St. Hilaire leaned back in his chair.

"Mr. Bayard, were you ever at Meadowlands, New Jersey?"

"I was there; just once."

"Were you ever in the court-house there?"

St. Hilaire started and flushed. Blake set his lips more firmly. He was sure of his man.

St. Hilaire did not answer. There came before his eyes the picture of a bullying constable, a severe judge, the indignities heaped upon him.

"Were you ever in the court-house there?" repeated Blake.

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"I was there; just once."

"You had been arrested as a suspicious character?"

St. Hilaire bowed.

"You were convicted of vagrancy, sentenced to pay a fine of ten dollars, or spend ten days in jail," continued Blake mercilessly.

"I paid your fine."

A look of utter amazement came to St. Hilaire's face. He replied quietly:

"You paid a fine for me, Mistaire Blake, it is only now I learn it. Permit me." He drew some money from his pocket and held out a bill. "I acquit the obligation with many thanks."

Blake waved the hand aside. "During the night following a robbery was attempted in my house."

"I know," remarked St. Hilaire.

"You admit it?"

"I prevented the robbery."

"Prevented it?" cried Blake in astonishment. "You were the robber."

"Blinky was the robbaire," replied St. Hi-

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laire. "I caught him, *flagrant délit*, but unfortunately, I let him escape."

Blake jumped up with a snort of impatient incredulity, and pushed the electric button violently. Clavers entered immediately.

"Clavers, can you swear positively as to the identity of this man? Remember this is a serious charge, and it depends upon your oath."

"That is the man who attempted to rob Meadowlands," replied the butler.

"Clavers is mistaken," said St. Hilaire.

"Ask him to take off his shirt, sir, ask him to take off his shirt!" exclaimed Clavers, triumphantly.

"That will do for the present, Clavers," commanded Blake.

"Would you condemn me upon the word of this one man, a servant? If you will permit, Mistaire Blake, I can explain to you everything."

"Clavers," said Mr. Blake, turning to the butler quickly, "ask Miss Blake to come back here. Perhaps we may be able to refresh her

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memory and find another witness," he added as Clavers left the room.

"Miss Blake will tell you——" began St. Hilaire.

"I prefer to hear my daughter speak for herself," interrupted Blake.

Katherine came hurriedly into the room, followed by Clavers.

"Katherine, take a good look at this man," said Blake.

"At Mr. Bayard, father?"

"At Mr. Bayard; picture him somewhat thinner, with a beard, dressed in poorer clothes—does he recall nothing to your mind? Think; see if you cannot remember."

"If you will send Clavers out of the room I will tell you."

Blake made a gesture of impatience. "I want Clavers to hear, he's the other witness."

"I will assist Miss Blake," interposed St. Hilaire; "she saw me at Meadowlands, just as you describe."

"Do you remember? Can't you answer Yes or no?" cried her father.

FRENCHY

"I do remember. Mr. Bayard has already explained everything to me. I was going to tell you."

"When did he make his explanation?" interrupted Blake; "just before I came into the room?"

"Yes."

"Very clever of him. He saw Clavers recognized him."

"Father, if you will send Clavers out of the room we three can talk more at our ease and you will be shown——"

"Clavers," said Blake, "go out to the precinct and ask Captain Walsh to send in a couple of his men."

"Father!" cried Katherine, "are you going to ruin this gentleman? Think, think what you are doing by such hasty action!"

"This *gentleman* is nothing more than a criminal. My duty to society forces me to turn him over to the law at once, no matter how disagreeable it may be to all of us."

"He is not, father," declared Katherine earnestly. "Oh, you must listen to us. You

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must hear our story. O Mr. Bayard, please forgive him."

The use of the plural pronoun, or the tone of her voice as she appealed to St. Hilaire, made Blake flush with anger.

"Clavers!" he cried, "what are you standing there for? Why don't you obey me?"

"Clavers!" commanded Miss Blake, "don't you dare to go on such an errand."

The butler shifted his feet uneasily and looked toward the door. St. Hilaire stood between him and it, and Clavers was afraid.

"Mr. Bayard stayed at Meadowlands because I invited him. He was a guest under our roof. This suspicion of him is outrageous!"

"Good God! what is the girl saying?" cried B'ake.

"The robbery was committed by another man. Mr. Bayard tried to prevent it. I did suspect him. I told you when you rushed in that the robber had just jumped through the window. But he hadn't. It was Mr. Bayard. I thought he was the robber, but he wasn't.

FRENCHY

The real robber had already gotten away. Don't you understand, don't you see?"

"I understand that he has invented a story none but you would believe."

The tears came to Katherine's eyes, but she said firmly:

"You must believe him."

"Miss Blake," said St. Hilaire gently, in great distress, "the unfortunate Mr. Bayard is not worthy that you shed one tear for him. It makes him feel very uncomfortable to listen. I shall go away now, and to-morrow if Mistaire Blake has not changed his opinion he can always find me."

"The fellow has bewitched you," cried Blake. "He shall be under lock and key to-night if I have to put him there myself."

Katherine stood in front of her father.

"If you do it I will go to the station-house with him. I will stand by his side and swear he is innocent."

"Katherine, have you lost all of your senses?"

"I will do it. *I will.*"



"Do not dare address my daughter again."

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Zachary Blake looked into his daughter's face. Her eyes flashed back at him.

He set his lips. "Clavers, show Mr. Bayard out," he said coolly.

St. Hilaire came up to Katherine and held out his hand.

"Miss Blake, nothing makes any difference to me. I am so happy you understand about me. Good-night."

"Good-night, Mr. Bayard. Please forgive my father."

"I forgive him with all my heart," said St. Hilaire.

"Do not dare to address my daughter again," exclaimed Blake fiercely. "Clavers, show Mr. Bayard the door."

"Clavers, remain! I can find it myself," said St. Hilaire.

Clavers shrank back from him. St. Hilaire bowed and went out.

When father and daughter were left alone together, Blake sat for some time without speaking. Mrs. Blake came into the room like a breeze.

FRENCHY

"Well, if that isn't just like you two. Sitting here spooning like a couple of young lovers, and leaving me to do all the entertaining. They are asking about you in the parlor. I'm having a delightful time. Remington Tuxedo is a dear. What was the matter with Clavers? He was simply impossible. Katherine, you missed it with Tuxedo. He has been devoting himself to me all the evening. You can't imagine how charming he talks. But you might have, for I know he was dying to find you. But then he was really charming to me. Mrs. Romaine is the prettiest thing on earth. Why don't you dress like her, Katherine? She has the men hovering around her like honey-bees over a clover patch. She doesn't seem to care for one of 'em. She's come out of mourning though, and is taking notice out of those big, violet eyes of hers, with her young-girl airs; and twice a widow, too. She's got some man in sight, I'll bet anything. I've enjoyed my party so much. The whole thing. All but Clavers's conduct."

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"If you will listen to what I have to say I will tell you what ailed Clavers, and something about your daughter which may interest you more than that young widow," said Mr. Blake in a tone of irritation.

"Gracious, Zachary, you look like a thunder cloud. It must be serious."

"It is; listen, won't you?"

While he talked Mrs. Blake's round eyes grew larger and rounder. Several times she tried to interrupt him with a question, but he always silenced her with a gesture. When he had finished her pent-up flood burst forth.

"Katherine, what does this mean? A burglar, and you defend him. My beautiful silver and gold punch-bowl. A wonder he did not take it. And I thought Clavers! Have you thought of the scandal? A thief, a common fellow, so gentlemanly too. Do you think it will get into 'Town Tit-bits'? I should die of mortification. Mrs. Romaine has had him at her house, too. She was taken in, too, that's some consolation. Thank heaven I did not introduce him first. Zachary, you must drop

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the whole matter. We are not sure enough of our position in society to run the risk of any talk."

"Martha, my duty to society is greater than any little fear of gossip. I must act according to my conscience," declared Blake sternly, stroking his beard rapidly.

"O Katherine," cried her mother, "how could you say such a thing as that he was your guest! What possessed you? What does it mean?"

"It means," cried her father hotly, "that she would disgrace us, disgrace herself rather than have her—" he stopped himself short even in his passion, and then continued with more self-control—"rather than have the man in whom she has taken such a strange and unwarranted interest brought to justice."

"I prevented you from committing an act of great injustice," replied Katherine earnestly.

"A woman's sentimentality," sneered her father.

"You would not let me tell what I know."

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persisted Katherine; "you were too impatient."

"Zachary, let her tell everything she does know," interposed Mrs. Blake, burning with curiosity.

"Go ahead," said Blake, throwing himself back in his chair. "You must know, Martha, that this is the tale which the French adventurer told Katherine this evening. There is not the slightest corroboratory evidence of it."

Mrs. Blake kept silence while her daughter spoke. "What do you think, Zachary?" she inquired, turning to her husband when Katherine had finished.

"Think!" exclaimed Blake, throwing the half-smoked cigar, which he had been chewing viciously, into the fireplace. "I *know* he's a rascal!"

"I know he is *not*," declared Katherine with equal firmness.

Mrs. Blake was on the verge of tears. "Oh, I know what the result will be if you get set against each other. It will be dreadful.

FRENCHY

I've always been ground to pulp between your two hard natures."

Katherine turned to her mother swiftly and put her arms about her. "I'm not hard, mother."

"I mean strong," repeated her mother, "you are so unyielding."

"Only when I am in the right, mother dear; only when it would be wrong, cruelly wrong, to yield."

"Daughter," said Mr. Blake persuasively, "don't you see that there is not a scintilla of truth in this man's story?"

"No! it's all true. Why should he come here if he were guilty? He would have been afraid."

"He contemplated some new villany of course. He trusted that he would not be recognized. He felt secure. He's an admirable actor."

"He's a gentleman, and perfectly truthful."

"Katherine, you don't intend really to stand opposed to me even in the court?"

"I shall."

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Blake walked up and down the room.

"Katherine," cried her mother with apprehension, "are you in love with this Mr. Bayard?"

Katherine gave her mother a look which that lady did not understand.

"It can't be, it can't be," she cried. "It would be too outrageous—and here's Remington Tuxedo as rich as—I think he is just on the point. I've jollied him to-night. I mean I've entertained him and made a social lion of him now that horrid Moravia has gone back on us. I've spent lots of money, and now if you go and upset all of my hopes and plans and aspirations——"

"Mother, I will not listen to you. Can't a woman stand for right and justice without being suspected of being in love with a man? Can't a woman defend a man who is cruelly maligned without being accused of being in love with him? As for your Prince of Moravias and Remington Tuxedos, I leave them to you. Entertain them, amuse them as much as you will. As for the encouragement you

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speaking of having held out to them, I think one will bear the subsequent disappointment with as much equanimity as the other."

"My daughter, you are hopeless. You—you don't know how you hurt me," and Mrs. Blake put her hands to her face.

"Katherine," said Blake, coming up and putting both hands on his daughter's shoulders, "look me in the face and deny absolutely that you care for this man, this *Monsieur* Bayard."

Katherine Blake looked straight into her father's eyes.

"I will only say that I think your attitude toward him is shamefully unjust, and I will do and say everything I can in his favor."

"I will crush him now," said Blake passionately; "I would crush him now, even though I were sure of his innocence."

Katherine's cheeks flushed hot. "I will defend him with all my might. If I knew he were guilty now, I would go and stand in the dock beside him."

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Blake stepped back a pace, his lips set, his eyes shining.

"You'll have a chance, for I'll have that man arrested to-morrow, as sure as my name is Zachary Blake."

"And I'll defend him, as sure as my name is Katherine Blake."

CHAPTER XIX

HER father and mother went into the drawing-room, leaving Katherine alone in the library. Her cheeks were flushed with fever. She went out to the front door, and, opening it, allowed the cool wind to blow in her face. Her bosom heaved, she had been stirred with anger which did not abate as her father's words repeated themselves in her ear. She knew he would keep his word.

A cab rattled through the streets, the sleepy driver flecking his whip at the ribs of the sleepy horse.

Katherine called out to him. He drew up and looked at her drowsily. She gathered up the train of her evening-dress, ran quickly down the steps, and sprang into the cab. The driver, now wide awake, leaned over in surprise.

"Where to?" he asked.

"To No. — Stuyvesant Square."

After all their guests had gone, Mr. and

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Mrs. Blake came into the library where the open fire burned cosily. "Goodness me, who would have believed it was so late!" cried Mrs. Blake, looking at the clock. "Zachary, where's Katherine?"

"She went to bed some time ago, I guess."

"Zachary, do you think you had better——"
One look at his forbidding face made her pause.

A nursery-maid ran into the room.

"O marm, Chrystal——"

"Miss Chrystal, if you please, Anna. I have told you that before."

"O marm, Miss Chrystal, marm!" said the girl, wringing her hands.

"For God's sake, girl, speak out!" exploded Blake, relieving his own nervous tension.

"Chrystal's not in the nursery!" cried the girl.

"She has probably walked into some of the other rooms!" exclaimed Blake savagely.

"Don't stand there wringing your hands like a blubbering little fool."

"We've searched the house, sir. She's

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gone! Oh, my little Chrystal's been taken away," and the poor creature burst into a paroxysm of tears.

"Choke that woman off!" cried Blake, almost in a frenzy. "Clavers," he cried, as the butler appeared, "look all over the house for little Miss Chrystal. The little minx may have crept into one of the maids' beds."

Clavers's voice trembled. "We've gone over the house from garret to cellar. She's not to be found, sir."

Mrs. Blake gave a scream and ran out of the room.

Blake stood for a moment leaning heavily against the table.

"Of course she's in the house."

"Mr. Blake, sir," said Clavers, trying to moisten his lips with his dry tongue.

Blake did not heed him.

"I saw the Frenchman tossing her in his arms and kissing her early in the evening. He wouldn't let me go to the door when he left——"

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"By heaven!" cried Blake, turning white to the lips, "could he be such a fiend! Could he have stolen the child in revenge or for money? Let me think what is to be done! Let me think!" and putting his hands to his head he strove to recover his self-possession.

The maid came back into the room with Mrs. Blake hanging almost fainting on her arm.

"O Zachary, O Zachary!" murmured his wife.

Clavers stepped to Anna's side.

"Have you found Miss Katherine? She's got a head worth six of them," he whispered.

"I can't find her anywhere," replied the girl in an awesome tone.

"Good Lord! has she gone too? Does Mrs. Blake know?"

"She don't seem to know anything. You tell the old man."

"I—I'm afraid to."

"Clavers, a cab!" ordered Blake.

"O Zachary, what shall we do, what——" cried his wife hysterically.

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"Where does this Bayard live?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, I don't remember. I don't know. Katherine knows. In Stuyvesant Place, or Waverley Square. Ask Katherine."

"We haven't time to wake Katherine; for once in your life think," thundered Blake.

"It is No. — Stuyvesant Square. It was on his letter."

"If he's got the child, he won't be there, but it may furnish a clew. Clavers!"

"The cab, sir!" said Clavers, running into the room.

Blake seized his hat and coat and sprang down the steps and into the cab.

"No. — Stuyvesant Square, and drive like mad!"

CHAPTER XX

As St. Hilaire climbed the stairs to his apartment with a heavy heart his foot struck against a large portmanteau which some one had left in the dark hallway.

"The janitor is careless and indifferent to the comfort of the tenants as always," he sighed, fitting the latch-key in the door.

A heavy foot stumbled up the stairs behind him.

"The noisy tenant," he muttered. "One never has peace and quiet in these bachelor apartments!"

A hand touched his shoulder. He turned with the words, "Pardon, sir, you wish the floor below; is it not?"

"Inhospitable, to keep an old friend at your door at this hour of the night," replied a voice in French.

St. Hilaire answered with a cry of delight.

"Jules Gérin, it is you! Come in! Come

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in! The very sound of your voice transports me to the Champs Elysées."

St. Hilaire clasped the little lawyer to his heart, and they both shed tears of joy.

St. Hilaire turned up the gas, and resting both hands upon Gérin's shoulders said: "Let me feast my hungry eyes upon you."

Monsieur Jules Gérin's face was rosy with health; his round little body was snugly clothed in a very tight-fitting suit of English tweed, while a flaming red scarf almost dimmed the lustre of a diamond pin.

"Mon Dieu, Gérin, what has metamorphosed you?"

"You find me thinner?"

"Thinner? No, but why these extraordinary clothes? Where is your conventional black coat?"

"I am on my first vacation in twenty years. I have been to London. I could not wear black in London; the city itself is too sombre. I should have died of melancholy, so I bought a costume appropriate for the Anglo-Saxon, to wear there and in America."

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"And how did you find me, you little 'John Bull'?"

"Through that delicious widow, Mrs. Romaine. I ——"

"Villain of a friend! you betrayed my secret. In my joy at seeing you I forgot to reproach you."

"My dear friend, first listen to me. Although this lady is a widow—a widow as one might say twice removed—she is as fresh and charming and beautiful as the day when she put off the blue and gray costume of 'The Bleeding Heart,' and came out into the world to trouble the hearts of men. She is riper in years, and more discerning of true merit, and best of all she is many times richer. Yes, I did betray my friend's secret. I admit it frankly, but I betrayed it to his own lasting advantage."

"Oh, Gérin! of what are you dreaming?"

"My dear Marquis de St. Hilaire, for I shall call you by your title, you are the luckiest dog alive, you have cast your bread upon the waters and now it comes back to you in a perfect flood of wealth."

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St. Hilaire laughed. "It does not overwhelm me, your flood of wealth. I am very poor."

"Poor! hein! where is your ranch?" and Gérin looked about the room inquiringly.

"The ranch is in the West, and so is all my money. I was robbed. I shall never make a good business man."

"Unfortunate," and Gérin laughed loudly.

"You seem to think that amusing. I do not. I will tell you more to make you laugh to-morrow morning, but you are fatigued now, and must go to bed. Behind that portière is a little box of a bedroom. I shall sleep here on the couch."

Gérin settled himself in an easy-chair. "My dear Marquis, on the contrary you are a remarkable young financier."

"Thank you. When you hear all, you will change your mind."

"Still another investment, which you made before leaving France, has borne wonderful fruit."

"Investment? I made none."

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"No? Henri Génier says yes."

"Henri Génier? Ah, now I remember. I gave him twenty-five thousand francs."

"He called it a loan and invested it for you in the shares of his enterprise. The shares of the Compagnie Générale Minéraux-Hydraulique are soaring; by the quotation of to-day your little twenty-five thousand francs have increased tenfold; they have become a quarter of a million."

St. Hilaire sprang out of his chair. "Sell them at once, Gérin, at once!"

"We shall have to wait until morning."

St. Hilaire drew out his watch eagerly. "No, it is past two o'clock. It is seven in Paris. You can send a cable now to sell at the opening of the Bourse."

"But the telegraph offices are closed."

"You will find some cable office open all night. Go and send the despatch. Do not delay, for the love of heaven! Already I feel this fortune slipping through my fingers. Sell everything at the market rate."

"The boy is a financier! I will go at once

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and send the despatch," cried Gérin, in ecstasy.

"I will leave the door wide open, my friend," said St. Hilaire, "to light the way."

Gérin put his jolly red face back into the room.

"You must reconsider the widow. It is destiny, my boy. The name of St. Hilaire shall not become extinct!" and he hurried downstairs.

St. Hilaire took off his overcoat and hat, and went behind the portière into his bedroom. The sound of singing came to him from the next apartment, and the mingled odor of welsh-rabbit and cigarette smoke was wafted across the hall.

St. Hilaire laughed good humoredly. "These bachelor apartments are lively places, and those artists are warm-hearted fellows. I hope they won't disturb Gérin with their conviviality. Dear old Gérin. Two hundred and fifty thousand francs! Fifty thousand dollars!"

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Putting aside the portière, he stepped out into the room.

In the doorway stood Katherine Blake. The excitement and the exertion of climbing the many stairs had for the moment made her breathless. As she saw him, she gave a sigh of relief and entered the room swiftly.

"Miss Blake!" he faltered, "is it you? Have I lost my reason? Is all this night a dream? I cannot understand. Why come you to me?"

"My father persists in believing you guilty," she panted as soon as she could speak.

"I know, I know," he replied gently. "Nevaire mind. Some day he will discover his mistake."

"He declares that he must prosecute you, that his duty to society demands it, that the evidence will surely convict you. They are coming the first thing in the morning to arrest you."

"I thank you with my whole heart, but think you that I will run away?" he asked with a troubled look.

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"I did not think. I only knew I could not bear to think of you taken away to jail. I wanted you to do something. You must go and engage the best lawyers; you must be prepared. Have no fear as to the final result. They can never convict you on such a charge. I will testify for you, for I believe in you."

"And your father—what will he do when his daughter stands opposed to him?"

"I cannot see injustice done. I must help you."

"But what will he say when he learns that you have come to warn me? He is so severe and stern. What will he do when he finds that you leave his house at night? Ah, Miss Blake, I tremble that you do this for me."

"I ran from the house without a thought of what he might think or do. I only thought of you; and now I am going back."

"I shall go with you, to the door of your house."

"No, you must not; you do not understand. You would be seen, and perhaps ar-

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rested to-night. I am going back alone. I am not afraid."

"I can nevaire permit that you go all alone; I shall accompany you."

"No, you shall not do it," she said firmly.

He took her hand, and felt that she trembled.

"Listen to me," he said, with a sudden burst of emotion. "From the moment when first I saw you, you have been like my good angel. You were so kind and so beautiful. I would that I possessed the eloquence to express the sentiment which you inspired at that time in my heart, but I cannot speak it."

"Mr. Bayard!" she began.

"Listen one little moment, oh my princess!" he cried eagerly. "There is a destiny in it all. This very night there comes to me a fortune, a small fortune, but one which makes me independent. This night you brave the displeasure of your father for me. Ah, I tremble when I think it, but it was for me. I put all I have at your feet, and say: My prin-

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cess, take it, and my name. It is an honorable name. Can you not take them? I can always care for you and protect you, for I love you, with my whole soul I love you."

"If you love me, Jean Bayard," she said gently, "let me go back alone."

"But I shall nevaire see you again!" he cried in despair. "They will take you away. I shall lose you who are more than life."

"You shall see me again, if you love me nothing shall keep you from me; but now you must let me go. Do you think that I am afraid?"

"It shall be as you command, my princess; but I must put you in the cab."

"Well, you may do that."

"And I shall run behind, at a distance, but always in sight, to see that my princess arrive safe home."

"That you shall *not* do," she said peremptorily, smiling upon him.

"Oh, my princess, yes," he pleaded. "At a great distance, just to see."

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"Oh, Bayard!" she said, holding out her hand to him.

"I go that way, yes?"

"No!"

"Listen," he exclaimed, holding up one hand, "to the footstep on the stair. It is my dear friend, my Jules Gérin. He shall descend again, the brave Jules, and order the cab. Meanwhile my princess repose here."

He took her hand and escorted her to the one armchair the room afforded.

"Rest here, my princess, until her servant prepares everything for the return to her home. Jules Gérin will be much surprised," he laughed gayly, "but he will run his legs off for my princess. Jules,—"

It was a heavier step than Gérin's on the stair, and a much larger form burst into the room.

"Father!" cried Katherine, springing to her feet.

Zachary Blake stood like a statue.

"I told you, father, that I should take his part." There was a note of challenge in

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her voice, though her eyes pleaded with him.

Blake seemed unable to speak; his lips framed the word, "Chrystal."

"Chrystal?" exclaimed Katherine, perplexed. "What do you mean, father?"

Blake looked from his daughter to St. Hilaire in a dazed manner. St. Hilaire never forgot the wild look in the man's eyes as he put his hand over his heart and, breathing heavily, tried to speak, but only whispered: "Where is she?"

"Father!" cried Katherine, thoroughly frightened, running to his side, "what is the matter? Chrystal is at home."

He pushed her from him, and finding his voice, spoke with a great effort to be calm.

"When Chrystal disappeared to-night, suspicion pointed only to one man; and I find *you* here in his apartment. For God's sake explain! If she's not here, where can she be? Is she *not* here? Tell me! tell me!" he cried in despair.

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Katherine, trembling, caught his arm. "Chrystal has disappeared?" she cried. "Oh, she will be found! The little creature is such a witch. She has hidden somewhere. By this time they must have found her at home. Father, I came here to tell Mr. Bayard what you were going to do. I was angry with you; my sense of justice was outraged. I had told him, and was going home. Come, let us hurry. We shall find Chrystal."

"She has been stolen!" cried Blake. "Stolen, as has been threatened, and as I have feared before this. Come back with me quickly, I have a carriage at the door." He swept his daughter away with him, and as he passed St. Hilaire he did not see him any more than if he had been part of the room's furniture.

St. Hilaire stood perfectly still. Suddenly there flashed through his mind the words he had heard Zavanno speak. He recalled the soft voice: "How can we two men take care of the child? You have got to." And Rose Goudet's reply. It came over him with the

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force of inspiration. He threw on his hat and coat, and leaped down the stairs.

The little French clock on the mantel-piece ticked off fifteen minutes faithfully and accurately. The faithful Jules Gérin came trudging up the stairs. Puffing, but cheerful, he entered the room. "I have sent the despatch. By breakfast time we shall get our reply. Now for a good sleep."

Jules went from the empty sitting-room into the tiny bedroom, and then, returning, looked about him inquiringly. The little French clock gave a cluck, a bird popped out, cuckooed musically four times, and shut itself up again with a snap.

Gérin sat down in the armchair and sighed. "I do not understand this at all. The boy has gone out and left no word. I can do nothing but await his return. I must sit here perhaps until morning—until morn—," and the regular beat of the clock was answered by the melodious piping of Jules Gérin.

CHAPTER XXI

ST. HILAIRE did not pause to think or reason, but flew impetuously through the streets until he came to the old rabbit-warren of a building to which Zavanno had unknowingly led him. The front door was closed and locked. St. Hilaire shook it impatiently. The gas-light on the corner flickered dully on the brass sign of the detective agency, and over the legend "We Never Sleep" the half-closed eye seemed to look at him drowsily.

Spying a faint light behind the shade of a basement window, he sprang down the steps where he could hear the hum of subdued voices in the room. He rang the bell violently, and almost on the instant the light was extinguished, and the whole building was shrouded in darkness. With an exclamation of chagrin he threw his weight against the door; the lock was old and the wood rotten, and breaking in he found himself in a dark

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hallway. Scratching a match on the wall, he entered the first room and coolly lit the gas, disclosing four men, each in his shirt-sleeves, each with the unwholesome gray pallor of the early morning on his face, and each holding tightly in his hand some playing cards. About the table were scattered several small piles of colored discs, and various sums of money.

"This is only a private game," growled one of the men. "You hadn't any call to break in. I suppose you're one of that fresh district attorney's men."

"Oh! pardon, that I interrupt your diversion. I wish the janitor," explained St. Hilaire.

"I'm the janitor," said a man with a two days' growth of black beard on his chin, and a mottled, unwholesome face.

"Where are the detectives that nevaire sleep?" questioned St. Hilaire. "I wish to hire them."

"We are the night-force," said a slim man with a short reddish mustache. There was

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nothing doing upstairs, so we dropped down on the janitor for a friendly game."

"I wish information about a man and a woman who inhabit this same building. Find out first if either is still here," and he described the pair.

"They went away early in the evening. Saw 'em go as I came in. They drove off in a cab. The woman carried a kid."

"A little girl?" inquired St. Hilaire, his heart almost stopping.

"I dunno, all two-year-old kids look alike to me."

"Oh! her own of course," said St. Hilaire. "Can you describe the driver?"

"The cab was a rickety old night-owl, and the driver had a whiskey voice, that's all I can tell you. If it was to save my life, I couldn't tell you anything more."

"If I hire you, think you that you can find this driver?" asked St. Hilaire, taking out his pocket-book.

"I shouldn't wonder; wait until I cash in my chips, and I'm with you."

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The man leisurely drew on his coat, took a parting drink from a can of beer, wiped the foam from his mustache, and said cheerfully, "Five dollars a day and expenses."

"Come," cried St. Hilaire impatiently. "I stay with you night and day until we find the cab-driver."

"Pay a day in advance, just to show we're on good terms," said the private detective.

"Here it is."

"All right; now any game you please. I'm for you."

CHAPTER XXII

AT the upper end of the city, in a region of vacant lots, stood a row of low red-brick houses. They were the only buildings on the street, and stood facing a wall of rock on the other side which rose as high as their roofs.

"It's the last house," said the cabman, pointing with his whip, "shall I take you to it?"

"No. This is near enough; wait for me here," and St. Hilaire sprang out.

The detective was about to follow. "You remain also. Come not until I summon you," and he ran up the steps of the house, whose green blinds were all tightly closed. In answer to his sharp ring the door opened, and Rose Goudet herself stood with her hand on the knob. He pushed into the hall quickly. At the sight of him she looked as if she would fall to the floor with fright.

"Come in here," he said quietly, drawing her into the front room. She went with him,

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trembling. "You were expecting some one else," he said grimly.

Her only reply was to look at him fearfully.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked.

"No, Monsieur."

"Do you not remember seeing me in Chicago?"

"Oh! I do remember, Monsieur."

"You remember what I asked you then? I asked you where Zavanno was. I have come once more to find him. Where is he, and *what has he done with the child?*"

She became so pale that St. Hilaire thought she was about to faint, but she recovered herself with marvellous quickness. "Our child is here. You see, Monsieur, he did not desert us. When he could, he came back. The child is well, thank you for asking."

"I do not mean your child. I mean the child which was stolen last night, the daughter of Zachary Blake."

"Monsieur is dreaming. I know of no child but my own."

"Then tell me what was meant when Za-

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vanno said: 'How can we two men take care of the child? You have got to!' What did you mean when you replied in tears, asking him to give the matter up?"

"Monsieur! are you the devil?" she whispered in awe.

"You shall tell me what has been done with little Chrystal Blake."

The tears sprang to her eyes. "Monsieur, I do not know what to do. Though you are the devil you shall not make me speak. Though you kill me I will say nothing, not one word," and she began to weep.

As she cried, the door of a back room which hung ajar was pushed slowly open, and a child of two appeared on the sill. She had just awakened from her nap, and her bright eyes, now very wide-awake, were staring into the room. She swayed gently from side to side, with her chubby hand on the door-jamb for support. Then with a laugh she bore a zigzag course into St. Hilaire's arms.

With an answering laugh, he caught up the pretty rogue, pressed the warm cheek against

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his own, and looked into the wide blue eyes which gazed fearlessly back into his.

Rose Goudet forgot the anxiety of the moment, and looked at her child rapturously.

"Oh, Monsieur! is she not beautiful?"

St. Hilaire turned upon the mother like a flash. "What if I should take her with me, and you should never see her again?"

"Give me my baby!" and Rose Goudet sprang at him fiercely. With one hand he held the child up high, while with the other he caught Rose Goudet and held her helpless. The child began to cry.

"She is mine! Give her to me! do you hear? She is mine!" cried Rose, struggling to free herself.

It was a cruel hand to hold the woman so, but his face was set, and his eyes shone with a light that rarely came there.

The child wailed with fright.

"For the love of heaven, do not torture me! Give me my baby!"

"I have a carriage near at hand. If I should leap into it and drive away you could

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never find me in this great city. To-morrow I could sail for Europe."

Almost fainting, she sank down at his feet.

"I will not do a great wrong in an attempt to right another," he said. "Here is your baby."

With a cry she sprang to her feet and clasped it to her breast, covering its face and hands with kisses. St. Hilaire put his hand on her arm. At his slightest touch she trembled, and said beseechingly, "You will not take her, Monsieur?"

"No, Rose Goudet."

"Oh, blessed Virgin! I thank thee thou hast heard my prayer!" she exclaimed, raising her eyes, and pressing the child still closer to her breast.

"Do you love her so very much?" asked St. Hilaire.

"Oh, Monsieur, to ask such a question! She is everything. She is my treasure, my all."

"She is safe—safe there in your arms. But if you *had* lost her?"

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"I should have died, Monsieur! I should have died!"

"Listen, Rose Goudet. Last night a child was lost." Again the woman trembled violently and turned away her head. "Listen, Rose Goudet."

"I am listening, Monsieur," was the faint reply.

"A little girl of six disappeared from her home where she was loved, where she was the idol. Can you not understand how much they loved her?"

Rose Goudet gave him one look, and again turned quickly away.

"And the mother—can you not picture the misery which she is suffering, every hour of the day? She is dying; and you, who have suffered such agony only for one brief instant, permit her to die!"

"Oh Monsieur, will you not spare me?"

"And throughout the land every other mother who has heard of this one's affliction feels her heart go out in sympathy toward her. Only you, who sit here with your own

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child safe in your arms, do nothing—when only you can restore the lost child."

"Oh, Monsieur, have pity on me!"

"Then tell me how he did it," cried St. Hilaire, catching her by the arm.

"There was a party that night. There were extra men employed in the house—one of them did it. It was all arranged beforehand—but it was not Zavanno did it."

"But he has the child. Tell me where, that I may restore her to her mother. That is all I ask."

"You will harm him. I must *not* tell you. I *will* not tell you one word. You may drag my tongue out by the roots, but it will be silent."

"I will not harm him."

"But others will not spare him."

"I will go alone. Tell me quickly for the sake of your own child, for the sake of your soul."

"You swear you will not betray him to the police, and that you will not harm him."

"I swear. Only let me get the child back."

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"The Virgin help me! I will tell you all. They *were* to bring the child here."

"Here to this house?" cried St. Hilaire.

"Yes, but they will not—yet. The hue and cry has been too great. I am to go to them to take care of the child."

"When were you to go?"

"To-day."

"Where were you to go? Tell me where she is!"

"Do you know a place called Cutoff Mountain?"

"No, where is it?"

"It is in the State they call Jersey. Wait, and I will tell you how to get there."

St. Hilaire looked into Rose Goudet's flushed face, as she gave the directions with feverish rapidity.

"You are not deceiving me?"

"No, Monsieur, I speak the truth now. They have a log cabin there, and pass for hunters. I was to join them and look after the child, for in their care she might be taken ill, and that is not in the plan. I was to leave

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my little one here with a friend, for of course I could not take her to such a place."

"You speak of *they*," St. Hilaire said. "Who are the others?"

"There is one with Adolphe, and a third who mails letters from various points in regard to the money demanded. It is an *enormous* sum they ask for. Monsieur," she added, placing her hand timidly upon his arm, and raising her eyes to his face, with the crouching air of a spaniel.

"Yes, yes," said St. Hilaire, hurriedly, "I must go now."

"Say again you will not harm him. You cannot understand what I feel. I have betrayed him into your hands."

"I have pledged you my honor."

"But," she faltered, "they may do you mischief. They may kill you! I did not think of that. Oh, *why* did I tell?"

St. Hilaire's only reply was a laugh, and the next instant he was gone.

Rose Goudet picked up her child and kissed it many times.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE New Jersey soil had turned to liquid mud under the force of the rain. St. Hilaire in a creaking buckboard drove a venerable white horse, whose head, with its Roman nose, was too large for its lean body. Upon descending from the railroad train he had entered the only house which stood near the station. Here he found a man sitting before a hot stove.

"I want to hire a conveyance. How much?"

The man was chewing tobacco, his gray beard was streaked with brown. He was warm, comfortable, and indifferent.

"I guess you'll have to look further for your rig, I haven't any to hire out."

"I wish to buy a horse and rig. How much?"

"I've got an old nag and a buckboard you can have for seventy-five dollars."

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St. Hilaire felt in his pockets. "But I have not so much money."

"Then you and me can't make a trade."

"Wait one moment," exclaimed St. Hilaire. "Here is a ring," hastily drawing the signet from his finger; "it is worth twice your seventy-five dollars."

"Well, I ain't much jedge of jewelry," said the farmer, taking the emerald and looking at it closely, "but a friend of mine bought a ring from a stranger for fifty dollars and it wasn't wurth ten cents."

"That ring is worth two hundred dollars."

"It's pretty, anyhow. I guess I'll swap my old white hoss and buckboard for it," and he led the way to the barn. St. Hilaire followed, and impatiently helped the deliberate farmer harness the horse.

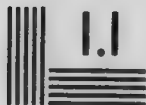
"He's powerful pressed for time," remarked the old man, as he watched him drive off. "If he goes that reckless I reckon he'll stop this side of nowhere 'fore long."

It was raining heavily. "One should be born with rubber skin to live in such a place,"



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muttered St. Hilaire, as he whipped the horse. The animal turned two staring, sightless eyes back at his new owner reproachfully, shook his heavy head, stumbled, and went forward with a lurch.

Although the horse was blind, and floundered along the road sinking over the fetlocks in mud at every step, his unvarying sluggish gait did carry them forward. Although the wheels more than once sank deep into a rut, threatening to stick there, the old white horse always proved just equal to the task, and bending his heavy head forward, pulled them out.

"Courage, my Rozinante!" cried St. Hilaire. "Thou art doing bravely. Make me this journey in safety, and I promise thee it shall be thy last."

The rain had swollen all the streams; a brook coming down a steep hill had become a torrent, and overleaping its natural bounds had flooded the road. When the old horse reached the water he stopped. St. Hilaire took soundings and found the depth little over a foot, but no urging could induce "Ro-

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zinante" to ford it. He sniffed at the muddy current, but no mule ever set his forefeet more firmly in opposition. St. Hilaire finally threw the reins over his back, leaped out, and splashed resolutely forward.

At the base of a mountain stood a house of rough-hewn logs. This simple cabin was not sheltered by a majestic mountain lifting a cloud-capped summit to the sun. It was a rugged hill with an overhanging brow and steep sides, down which dashed a turbulent stream bringing with it dirt, stones, and branches of trees.

Friendly curls of smoke came out of the cabin chimney, as some one within replenished the fire. Outside the door hung a few birds and a rabbit or two, as testimony of the occupation of those who dwelt there.

"It is the place," said St. Hilaire, and bending low under the boughs of a tree, he watched the door with all the patience he could command. At the end of half an hour he had worked his way round to the side of the house where a cedar grew close to a small window.

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He was on the point of hazarding a peep through the dirty window-pane, when the door opened. St. Hilaire, screened by the branches, saw a man come out of the house with a pail in his hand and go into the woods. Although the man's face was hidden by the hat slouched over his face to keep off the rain, from his figure and gait St. Hilaire felt sure it was Blaisdale. The door had been left partly open; St. Hilaire went up to it and listened. To the sense of hearing the room within was empty. St. Hilaire pushed the door open and stepped inside. A vicious growl made him draw back with a start. In a corner of the cabin lay a large wolfish dog, and with her head pillowed on his side lay the child asleep. St. Hilaire stood perfectly still. The dog did not move, but, with his eyes fixed upon him, kept up a low, internal rumbling. St. Hilaire took one step forward, and again came the sharp vicious snarl, with the white fangs exposed. St. Hilaire stood stock-still again. The dog moved uneasily, and with a quick caress licked the sleeping child's hand, almost instantly

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turning his head back, with teeth menacingly bared, to watch St. Hilaire. For a minute St. Hilaire stood thus, as motionless as marble, while he took in every detail of the room: the bare unplastered walls; the rough table, upon which lay a half-skinned rabbit, with the knife beside it; the fire burning on the hearth, with an empty black kettle standing by; and in the corner nearest the fire little Chrystal, still sleeping, with her locks mingling with the tawny hair of the dog. Carefully St. Hilaire slipped off his overcoat.

Although he was very slow, every movement was met by a growl or a snapping of teeth. With his coat on his left arm, he stepped quickly forward to the table. Like a cannon-ball the wolf-dog shot through the air, burying his teeth in the woolen. St. Hilaire met the onslaught with all his resistance, yet the force of it nearly sent him to the ground. Seizing the knife, he struck up under the animal's foreleg. He could feel the dog's teeth sinking through the doubled folds of the garment, and again he drove the knife

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upward and in, to the hilt. Then he shook off the dying brute. The creature, whining low, crawled away from him to the corner where the terrified child was crying loudly. He tried to lick her feet, and she, stopping instantly in her wailing, put her little hand on his head. "Wicked! wicked!" she cried, raising a passionate face toward St. Hilaire.

"Chrystal, do you not know me? I have come to take you home to mamma!"

"Yes, yes," she cried, and the next instant was in his arms, sobbing "I want to go home, I want my mamma."

"Hush, little one," he whispered sternly. "If you would see mamma you must be very still and do just as Mistaire Bayard say. Will you?"

"Yes," she whispered in return, checking her tears with a convulsive choke. "Please take me home."

St. Hilaire took her in his arms. She was shivering and her lip trembled, but she was as quiet as a mouse.

He stepped to the door, to draw back into

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the room quickly. Still holding the trembling child in his arms he dragged the carcass of the dog to the farthest corner, threw some old coats over it, and then hid in an inner room.

St. Hilaire found that his place of refuge was a small store-room with a barrel of flour, a few potatoes, a spade, and a broken gun.

"Are the wicked men coming to catch us?" whispered Chrystal.

"Hist!" replied St. Hilaire, hugging her close. He could feel her heart throbbing like a young bird's. Through the crack which he had left in the door, he saw Zavanno and Blaisdale enter, and then heard their voices.

"And they haven't sent the money?" asked Blaisdale, setting down the pail of water.

"Not a cent," replied Zavanno, sitting down by the table. "The old cuss is spending money like water; he's offering a fortune in rewards, but not one cent of ransom has he given up."

"He will, though," said Blaisdale, "if he cares enough for the child to spend a fortune

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to get her back. Soon he won't care how he gives it up, as long as he gets her."

"He adores the child," cried Zavanno. "He worships her more than he does gold. That's the reason I picked him out. Halloa, where *is* the kid?"

"Why, she's here. I left her asleep in the corner by the fire with the dog."

"But the dog's gone too," and Zavanno went to the door and whistled.

"That's strange!" exclaimed Blaisdale. "The dog would be faithful to the death."

"You fool! I told you not to leave the child for a moment," said Zavanno, turning fiercely. "She represents our fortune. Oh, this comes of Rose failing to get here!"

"But the child and dog must be somewhere just outside the door. I only left them for a few minutes while I went to the spring. Nothing could harm her while Wolf watched over her;" and he stepped to the door and, looking out over Zavanno's shoulder, whistled also. "I do not understand," he said. "They must be close by. I'll just step out——"

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"You stay here. I'll go. The dog knows my voice better," replied Zavanno in a commanding tone, pushing Blaisdale back.

St. Hilaire heard him brush past the side of the cabin and into the woods, alternately giving a loud whistle and calling the dog by name. Blaisdale walked back to the fire.

St. Hilaire still held the knife which had ended poor Wolf's career. His fingers closed about the handle. He had promised not to harm Zavanno, but no such vow would protect Blaisdale if he stood in the way.

He reached out to open the door. Just as he touched it a dull roar sounded from the mountain-side which sent the blood from his heart.

"I want to go home," panted the child, clinging to him.

St. Hilaire stepped into the room. Blaisdale was standing still. Although he looked at St. Hilaire, he neither recognized nor paid any heed to him, but cried in a voice of terror: "What is that noise?" He ran first to the

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window, and then to the door. "It is a landslide!" he shouted in answer to his own question, and rushed from the cabin, St. Hilaire following him out of the door. A great mass of earth, detached from the hill-top by the constant rain, was coming down upon them, sweeping trees and rocks before it resistlessly. It was impossible to gauge the exact path of the slide, but St. Hilaire could see that Blaisdale, fifty yards away, running aimlessly, and Zavanno, who, returning from his search, was making toward the house, were both in the track of the avalanche. St. Hilaire stood close to the cabin. He felt Chrystal's arm tighten about his neck, and she hid her face in his coat. He wrapped her close in his arms. The landslide struck a huge rock embedded in the earth just above them, which broke its course and sent it sweeping around the cabin. A flying fragment of stone hit St. Hilaire and sent him to the ground half stunned, with the roar as of a cataract in his ears. Through the darkness he faintly heard the voice of the child, and putting

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out his hand could feel the logs of the hut.

"I am afraid. Take me away, you said you'd take me home," pleaded the child. St. Hilaire struggled to his feet and wiped the dirt from his eyes.

"Are you hurt, little one?" he asked, pushing back her hair with nervous hand, and anxiously scanning the pale little face.

"I don't know," she whispered, looking at him with large frightened eyes.

"Fear nothing, there is no danger now," he said, trying to reassure her. "I will certainly take you home by and by—very soon. Do not tremble. You are not afraid now, are you?" he asked soothingly.

"No-o," she replied doubtfully, clinging closely to him. "No, I'm not very afraid just now, but I'm so cold."

He went into the cabin. The fire was burning brightly, and the steam hissing cheerfully from the kettle over the blaze made the silence seem the deeper, while a hundred yards from the door Zavanno and

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Blaisdale lay buried under the mountain-side.

St. Hilaire drew up to the fire, and held the child close to the warmth, until overcome with fatigue she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE little child slept in his arms until the fire burned low and the room was dark. He put her down on the rough couch and threw some big sticks upon the embers. The flames leaped up with a roar, making the cabin suddenly brilliant with the light; and then Chrystal awoke, sat up on the couch, and, rubbing her eyes, looked at the fire and at St. Hilaire.

"I want my mamma," she said.

St. Hilaire came to her. "You shall see her very soon, my little Chrystal—in one or two days."

She began to cry. "But I want to see her now. I want Katherine."

St. Hilaire dropped upon one knee and put his arms around her.

"Listen, little one. It is night. Outside it is dark; it is raining and the wind blows furiously. We cannot go now. I could not find the way."

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"Oh, but I want to see her dreadful. I want to go now."

"Alas! it is impossible. But to-morrow when the sun is bright we will find our way out from here, and you shall go home to your mamma."

"And to Katherine?"

"Yes, of course to Katherine. Always Katherine. Do not cry. To-night we will stay here. We will make up a big fire, and shall be so warm, with all the blankets and skins."

Her tears dried on her cheeks, and she looked around her with interest.

"Is that a bear in the corner?" she whispered, nestling close to St. Hilaire.

"It is only the skin of a bear. See, it cannot hurt us." St. Hilaire gave it a little kick with his foot.

"Where are those two men?"

"They have gone away."

"I am so glad. I do not like them."

"You are not afraid, little one?"

"No-o, if you promise me there are no bears



" It will be heard for me, that little Protestant prayer "

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here, and if you promise to take me home to my mamma and papa, for you cannot break a promise, you know."

"I promise, solemnly, and now you must go to sleep."

"Where is the bedroom?" she asked with curiosity.

"I will make you a beautiful bed by the fire, and you will be warm like a rabbit all night."

"Are we going to sleep with all our clothes on?"

"Yes, because it is cold. We need our clothes, as the rabbit needs his fur. Now that the bed is made, see how soft and warm I will cover you."

"Wait," and putting her face close to the lapel of St. Hilaire's coat she repeated the Lord's prayer, closing with a benediction upon all her relatives, male and female, and upon her own most cherished possessions, including a kitten and a doll.

"Now, art thou prepared to sleep?" asked St. Hilaire.

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"Oh, I forgot." Down went the head once more, and a special blessing was asked for St. Hilaire.

"I shall always put you in," she said, and a moment later was fast asleep.

"It will be heard for me, that little child's prayer," murmured St. Hilaire, bending over her.

He put more wood upon the fire, and threw himself down before it. He lay thus half the night, looking at the blazing embers, or at the little figure, wrapped in the red Indian blanket, which breathed regularly and peacefully.

He fell into a doze, to wake with a start in the cold of the morning. He replenished the fire, and, going to the window, looked out and saw that in the night the rain had turned to snow.

St. Hilaire began to get some food for breakfast.

"Are we going home to-day?" asked a small voice, and out of the pile of blankets rolled little Chrystal.

St. Hilaire looked out of the window at the eddying snow.

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"I hope we go to-day, when the storm passes. Now eat the porridge I have prepared."

It was not until noon that the storm ceased, leaving a drift almost to the eaves of the log-cabin. St. Hilaire took a shovel and attacked the pile of snow in front of the door. If he could make his way to the road he felt that he could carry the child on his back to the railroad station. Chrystal came and looked on with great interest. Finally she procured a small piece of shingle and went silently to work in imitation, picking like a small woodpecker.

"Do you think we shall dig out to my home?" she asked presently.

"Yes," answered St. Hilaire, hardly pausing to look at her. "We shall soon get out."

After a while, growing weary, she went into the cabin. St. Hilaire hardly missed her until he heard a plaintive little voice behind him:

"I'm *rather* lonesome."

"Poor little Chrystal," he cried, throwing down his spade and going back into the hut.

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"*Tiens*, see what I do!" and in a few minutes he had whittled from a piece of firewood, a doll, and dressed it in a rabbit skin.

"It is *beautiful*," cried Chrystal, holding out her arms, her eyes dancing with delight. "It is a boy."

"It is a little Esquimau, and he comes from the land of snow and ice," said St. Hilaire, as he resumed his spade, and left the child singing to the piece of wood.

"What is your name?" cried the child from the doorway to St. Hilaire.

St. Hilaire stopped, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead said, smiling: "Jean Bayard."

"Jean Bayard," repeated the child to herself several times as she returned to her play—"Jean Bayard."

"*Bel enfant*," said St. Hilaire, coming in chilled to the bone, and tired as a dog, "*bel enfant*, I have broken my promise. It is impossible to-day that we leave, but to-morrow, yes, I am sure."

The child looked at him with quivering lip.

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"Oh, *do* let us go now. I want to see my mamma. You said to-day."

"It is too late this day. I fear to get lost in the woods, but to-morrow morning we can go. You forgive me. Is it not?"

"Shall we really, truly start to-morrow?"

"With the sun. Do not cry, dear little Chrystal."

She swallowed the lump in her throat and smiled bravely. "I'll try not to cry."

St. Hilaire set briskly to work to prepare some supper. This they were soon eating gayly together, St. Hilaire behaving like a boy, to the intense delight of Chrystal.

"You're such a funny man!" she cried, and the cabin rang with the child's laughter.

After supper, she climbed upon his knee. "Tell me a story, please."

"About bears?" asked St. Hilaire obligingly.

"No," with a furtive glance over his shoulder at the corner, "not to-night. Tell me what your mamma told you when you were little."

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"Shall I tell you about 'Petit Puceron'?"

"Oh, yes," with a jump of delight, "What is it?"

He told her the story just as it had been told to him as a child by his nurse, and the little girl listened attentively.

"You like it?" asked St. Hilaire, when he had finished, looking down into the grave little face for some sign of approbation.

"Yes," was the polite rejoinder. "Thank you so much. It's the same as Hop-o-my-Thumb, isn't it?"

"Hop-my-Tum, what is it?"

"Would you like to hear about Hop-o-my-Thumb?" she asked. "Yours wasn't *exactly* right."

"Yes, tell me."

Chrystal rendered her version thrillingly, and he received it with great appreciation.

'Now you tell it to me, my way,' she instructed, and received his repetition of the old tale with delight.

All of a sudden she sprang from St. Hilaire's knee with a cry of alarm.

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"What is it?" exclaimed St. Hilaire.

"Oh, Jean Bayard's out in the snow."

St. Hilaire knit his brow. "I do not understand. I am in the house."

"I couldn't call him 'Squeemo,'" wailed the child, "I named him 'Jean Bayard' for you, and I've left him out-doors."

"Nevaire mind, we will find him," said St. Hilaire cheerfully, taking a light.

After considerable poking about in the cold drifts they extracted the wooden doll from a snow-house the child had made for it.

Chrystal received the foundling with rapture. "Is he froze?" she asked of St. Hilaire.

"I think not; his rabbit skin protected him."

"Well I guess I'll put him very close to the fire now, and to-night he must sleep in my bed with me."

In a few minutes she fell fast asleep in St. Hilaire's arms with her head pillowed on his shoulder, the small hand tightly clutching the rudely fashioned doll.

St. Hilaire looked down at the dear face

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surrounded by the soft hair, and he seemed to see the face of Katherine. He held the child close to his breast for a moment, then kissing her, laid her gently in the bed of blankets, and sat down by the fire. His heart was full of gratitude to think that he had been guided to her, and that he alone had saved her. If he had not come with the utmost speed, waiting for nothing, hesitating at nothing, little Chrystal would not now be lying there sleeping as peacefully as in her bed at home. And then his imagination drew the picture of Zavanno lying outside the door. He saw the light blue eyes, the delicate white hands, and the long blond mustache that curved away from the lip so jauntily, hiding the corners of the cruel, sensual mouth. Yet a woman had loved him, had given a world for him, and at this moment was waiting, her heart dull with suffering, all her thoughts and torturing doubts and fears centred on him who lay dead and buried deep under a pile of earth and snow, his heart little colder than it had been in life.

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Chrystal gave a scream in her sleep.

St. Hilaire sprang to her side. "What is it, little one? What's the trouble?"

He bent over. She threw her arms around his neck and clung to him convulsively, but the words she whispered were unintelligible.

"What is it with my pretty?" he repeated.

Awakened she began to sob.

"What is it with my little one?" cried the man in despair.

"I am afraid!"

"Of what? There is nothing."

"Oh, I don't know, I'm just afraid," and she clung closer to him.

St. Hilaire felt that she trembled. He put his hand on her face. It was hot.

"She is ill!" he cried in consternation.

"I want my mamma."

"Do you feel ill, little Chrystal?"

"Yes, don't go away. I want you to hold my hand."

"Where do you feel ill?"

"All over, I want mamma."

"She is ill. She will die," thought St. Hi-

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laire in despair. "What can I do? Oh, why was I not a doctor? Why did I go to that stupid St. Cyr and learn the manual of arms? Why did I not study medicine? Then I would be of some use. Let me think. What did they do for me when I was a little one and taken ill? Ah, the tisane! Let me see what the storeroom offers. I will make a tisane."

He bustled about, leaving the child sobbing softly to herself under the blankets. He found nothing but some leaves of green tea.

"This will have to do," he thought. "I will make it hot, it may do her some good." And he heated some water on the fire. "Here, little one, drink this, to cure you."

She took it obediently, and puckered her lips. "I don't like it. It is not sweet. I want a drink of water."

"I forgot the sugar, nevaire mind. It is a tisane; drink a little—little more."

She pushed it away, and fell asleep again, her hand in St. Hilaire's, and thus he sat and watched her until morning.

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When she awoke, she greeted him with a smile. "It is breakfast time?"

"How are you, little one?"

"I want to get up, have breakfast and go right off," she exclaimed, kicking her way out of the coverings.

"How do you feel? Are you well and strong?" he repeated anxiously, taking hold of her and looking into her face.

"I feel all right."

"But you were so sick in the night and cried out so."

"I don't remember," she said, looking at him wonderingly. "I am not sick, and I am awful hungry for breakfast."

"A miracle!" cried St. Hilaire. "Thank God who answered my prayer, she will not die. I will take her home to-day!"

After swallowing a little food, St. Hilaire caught up the child. "I will carry you over all the rough places, and the smooth road you can walk yourself a little, yes?"

"I can walk very far," answered Chrystal, "and oh, I'm so glad to go!"

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St. Hilaire, holding the little girl in his arms, plunged through the drifts and clambered over the mass of earth and rock.

Chrystal clung tightly to his neck with one arm, hugging her doll as tightly in the other.

It was slippery going over the rocks, and once his feet went from under him. He held the child so closely wrapped in his arms that not one of the jagged edges touched her soft little body. They were neither of them hurt, and getting upon his feet he gained the road a few rods below. There he put the child down and paused to take breath.

"Did you hurt yourself?" asked Chrystal, looking up at him with a woman's sympathy in her child's face.

"It is nothing," he replied.

"I can walk, myself," said Chrystal.

They went along the road at a snail's pace hand-in-hand. A few flakes of snow were in the air when they left the cabin, and now it was storming again.

"We must proceed as quick as we can,"

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said St. Hilaire. "I will carry you again soon."

"Oh, I can walk a long way yet," said Chrystal.

Their progress was so very slow that St. Hilaire was on the point of lifting her in his arms when with a sense of deep relief he heard the muffled sound of wheels coming up behind them.

CHAPTER XXV

No sooner had St. Hilaire left her than Rose Goudet's heart sank. She reproached herself wildly for having disclosed Zavanno's hiding-place.

"What have I done?" she cried aloud. "They will kill each other. He has promised not to harm Adolphe, but when they meet what will prevent? Ah, why must Adolphe have done this? Why was he not content as we were?" And she looked into the face of her child which she held tightly in her arms.

As two days went by and no news came to Rose Goudet, her anxiety grew with every hour.

One moment she was sure that Zavanno was dead, killed by St. Hilaire, the next she felt that St. Hilaire had been killed by Zavanno. The fear took possession of her that the little child had perished through exposure or lack of care. The sound of her own child's

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voice became a torment to her. In a moment of desperation she left her baby in the care of a friend and hurried from the house, going direct to Madison Avenue.

"I want to see Mrs. Blake," she said in a low voice to the maid who opened the door. After a lapse of considerable time, during which Rose Goudet sat looking about her furtively, trembling like a scared animal, Katherine came into the room.

"Mrs. Blake?" asked Rose, hardly lifting her eyes.

"I am Miss Blake."

"I am come to tell you something," the woman said with a foreign accent.

"What is it?" asked Katherine. "If you have anything of importance to say, you must speak quickly, otherwise I must ask you to excuse me."

Rose Goudet raised her eyes to Katherine's face, and for the moment forgot her own unhappiness.

"The child was taken to Cutoff Mountain. She may be there now. I hope so. Oh, I

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hope so!" and she threw herself at Katherine's feet.

"What do you mean?" cried Katherine, seizing Rose Goudet by the arm and raising her from the floor. "Do not dare trifle with us in our trouble. We are distraught already."

In a choking voice Rose Goudet disjointedly told the whole story. "I know Zavanno is dead," she sobbed. "I know it. Nothing matters now, but I hope the child is safe. Oh, I do hope so!"

Giving no further thought to the crying woman, Katherine ran to the telephone. She tried to call up her father, but for the moment it was impossible to reach him. She hung up the receiver.

Her mother was upstairs asleep under the influence of a heavy opiate.

A vibratory rumble shook the air in front of the house, and Katherine saw Mrs. Harrison Romaine jump lightly out of an automobile.

Mrs. Romaine swept into the room. She was covered to her heels in a cloak of sable,

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her cheeks were pink with exercise, and she brought into the warm house a breath of winter.

She came straight up to Katherine and caught her by the hands.

"I know I cannot do anything, but I wanted to take your hand and show you what I felt."

Katherine looked at her for an instant, then replied quickly. "You can do something for me. You can take me to police headquarters in your automobile."

"Gladly; shall we go now?"

"Instantly, and take this woman with us."

Rose Goudet, who had remained sitting, looking at them dumbly, started at the words, and looked as if she would run away. Katherine, who had already gotten on her wraps, took Rose by the arm.

"Come!" she said in a tone which dominated her, and, with Eleanor Romaine on the other side, took her through the hall.

As they were about to leave, Katherine saw that the woman had come without hat or shawl. She hastily threw an opera cloak over

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her shoulders, saying: "The air is cold. Come, let us hurry."

The automobile with the three woman went whirling down-town.

To her regret Katherine did not find her father as she had hoped, but her face lighted up with relief as she saw Livingston coming toward her.

"Mr. Livingston, where is my father?"

"He has gone out with one of the detectives on a clew. He cannot be quiet for an instant. Is there anything I can do, Miss Blake?"

"I want you and the police to hear this woman's story."

"O'Donnell!" Livingston beckoned to the man with whom he had been talking.

Rose Goudet was put through a severe cross-examination. She was less communicative now and thoroughly frightened. Several times Katherine had to interrupt or supplement the testimony.

"What do you think, O'Donnell?" asked Livingston anxiously.

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"I think the woman may be speaking the truth to some extent," replied the detective.

"Cut Off Mountain is not over fifteen miles from Meadowlands," said Livingston.

"We can go to Cut Off and find out what there is in this story," said O'Donnell.

"Let us go at once," cried Katherine.

Livingston looked at her sympathetically.

"Had you better go, Miss Blake? It will be a severe journey. We shall take an automobile and tear out there over the rough roads."

"I must go. Leave word here for father, telling him what we have learned, and what we have done. Let us start at once."

"I will tell him to go to Meadowlands, for if we find Chrystal, as I hope and pray we shall, we can go there," said Livingston.

"I have a forty-horse power Panhard at the door which holds six. We can use that. I'm going with Katherine," volunteered Mrs. Romaine.

Livingston nodded to O'Donnell.

"I'll take another man with us," said the detective, "and we will carry this woman

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along for the sake of extracting any further information."

The country roads were in bad condition from the storm, and grew worse the farther they progressed in their journey. Livingston drove the heavy machine relentlessly, and although it labored at its task, it held on its way, resentfully throwing back the snow and mud upon its passengers. The swaying of the motor-car and the flying particles made conversation difficult, even if they had been in a talkative humor; so, muffled in their great leather coats and caps, they rode in silence, save for the pounding of the engine and the whistling of the air as they rushed through it.

"Here is the place at last," said Rose Goudet. "I was here two weeks ago with him. I did not suspect then——" She stopped with a cry. "Dieu, what has happened? Oh, Mon Dieu!"

"There's been a landslide," said O'Donnell.

"The cabin is still standing there," said Katherine with white lips. "Is no one in it?"

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Livingston stopped the machine, and leaped out followed by the others.

"The snow's badly drifted about the place," remarked O'Donnell, as they plunged up a slight incline.

The place was empty.

Rose Goudet gave one look and ran out, throwing herself on the snow.

Katherine caught Livingston's arm to prevent herself from falling.

Mrs. Romaine stood quite still; her feet in their thin French shoes sunk deep in the snow. She did not heed the cold, although she shivered under her sables.

O'Donnell stepped to Rose Goudet's side and saw that she had picked up a man's hunting-cap, and was wailing over it like a suffering animal. He came to Livingston and drew him aside.

"Get the women away. There's nothing to do here. To-morrow we'll send a gang of men and dig away some of this."

"You think they are underneath?" whispered Livingston in awe.

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"Some one has come out of the hut since the slide, but the fresh snow has covered his trail. Some one was caught in the slide. We can't do anything to-night. Get these women away."

"Miss Blake," said Livingston very gently, "there is no one here. We can do nothing here now."

"I can't bear to give up. They have been here. O Mr. Livingston, they must have escaped the landslide. Didn't they, didn't they, Mr. Livingston?"

George Livingston looked straight at her. "I hope so, Miss Blake; I believe so. Come, you must go to Meadowlands for the night. We shall search for Chrystal until we find her."

Katherine and Mrs. Romaine went back to the automobile.

O'Donnell bent over Rose Goudet. "You get on to the back seat with me, and if you have any thoughts you keep 'em quiet."

She obeyed him mutely. The big machine went groaning and rumbling away from the desolate scene.

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When they reached Meadowlands they found the house lit up, and Blake pacing the front hall. "I have just gotten here. Have you found out nothing? Was it another false clew?" He spoke with great self-repression as he took hold of George Livingston's strong hand. O'Donnell took him by the arm, led him aside, and talked to him in a low tone.

"Get every available man in the village, and have the place dug up to-night. Telegraph to the neighboring towns if necessary for more men. Search the surrounding country night and day until you find—you find—something," cried Blake swallowing hard. "O'Donnell, we must know something definite soon. This suspense is killing us."

"We shall know something definite soon, sir," said the detective.

"O'Donnell, do you think there is any hope, do you think the child is alive?"

"There's always hope, sir," but the voice had a falling note in it.

Blake wiped his forehead constantly.

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"They must have heard the landslide coming, O'Donnell."

"The indications are, sir, that some were standing outside and some were in."

"Oh, I'd give my fortune, O'Donnell, to the man who would put my little girl in my arms again."

"Come and lie down here on the lounge for a little, father; you're all worn out," pleaded Katherine.

Livingston turned to Mrs. Romaine.

"Poor Blake," he said feelingly. "I'm afraid he's down and out this time."

"Why of course he feels like that," replied Eleanor Romaine. "Of course he would gladly sacrifice every penny in the world if it would give him his child. I would gladly give up my fortune, all the accumulation for which Romaine slaved and died, for any one I cared for, yes, just to see him here in the room safe and well, to hear the sound of his voice——"

Livingston looked with surprise at the pale face and glistening eyes. She stopped as she

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caught his gaze. A faint color came to her cheek. Livingston could not tell whether there were tears in her eyes, or not.

Livingston took up the conversation where he had left it. "When I said he's down and out, I meant his fortune. He has been pretty hard pushed for some time past, but Blake's a good fighter. This trouble came at a time when he could not afford to be away an hour. He has not been near his office for three days. He has been like a man out of his senses all the time. He has not seemed to understand the simplest business. They have rather got at him, this time, Mrs. Romaine. They've very nearly put him out of business for good."

"It's a shame," cried Mrs. Romaine, flushing with indignation. "It's a cruel shame that men make money so heartlessly. They ought to give it all back to him, every cent."

"It's part of the game," replied Livingston quietly. "The others could not or did not stop to realize why he wasn't there. It was their turn to play and they had to, or lose their opportunity for good and all. I guess there'll

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be friends ready to lend him a hand if he's not too hopelessly involved."

"Oh, some of his friends must help him," said Mrs. Romaine quickly.

"Blake's a proud and a square man. He won't borrow unless he can see his way to pay. But if his child isn't found he won't hold up his head again anyway."

"And if she's found for him, nothing else will matter. And she will be found, and St. Hil—— Mr. Bayard will be found to be safe. Do you not really believe so?"

CHAPTER XXVI

ST. HILAIRE stood looking anxiously up the road at an open wagon drawn by a steaming horse, coming laboriously through the storm. The driver, a round-shouldered man in a fur cap, was swearing at the weather, at the bad road, and at the overworked horse.

"What's this?" he cried out, as a white figure rose in front of the horse's nose. "What do you want?"

"To ride with you."

"I ain't givin' rides. Geddap!"

St. Hilaire blocked the way. "We must ride with you."

"Is there anybody with you?" asked the other looking around fearfully.

"Only this little girl," replied St. Hilaire. The man peered over the dashboard at Chrystal, who stood like a little snow image.

"My horse is dead beat out," exclaimed the man.

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"I regret it is in this case necessary," said St. Hilaire, as he placed Chrystal on the seat and leaped up beside her. The driver gave one look at his face, and made no further remonstrance. St. Hilaire took the reins.

Chrystal, wedged in between the two men, was so muffled in the buffalo robe that she could not talk, but she looked out upon the winter scene with eyes round and bright.

Thus St. Hilaire drove for what seemed an endless time. When they came out of the wooded road to the open and more level country the storm cut upon them like sharp knives, but lights twinkling in the distance revived St. Hilaire's chilled blood. "There is a town and the railroad at last!" he cried with relief. When they got well into the village Chrystal sat up quickly.

"Why we're home!" she cried, almost falling off the seat in her excitement.

"Yes, we will take the cars here for your home," answered St. Hilaire.

"No! No!" she persisted excitedly, "this is home, one of my homes. See that street

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with the big trees on it. See! there is the summer-house, only it's a winter-house now. There's our front gate, and it's open." She laughed and clapped her hands.

St. Hilaire gave one look as she bade him. He saw the clump of tall leafless maples, standing guard over the house. Lights shone from the windows. The iron gates had been thrown wide open by the last one to go up the driveway, and St. Hilaire, his heart beating fast, drove up the snow-carpeted way to the large porch.

The door bell rang violently. Those within the house, their nerves tightly strung, leaped at the sound, but it was Katherine who first reached the door. A small body hurled itself at her with the cry of "Katherine, Jean Bayard brought me home!" while a pair of small arms clasped her neck.

"O my darling, my darling!" cried Katherine, pressing Chrystal close. "Is it you? Heaven has sent you back to us. O Mr. Bayard!" and she caught up St. Hilaire's hand and put it to her lips.

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Blake seized his little daughter from them and covered her face with kisses, while his eyes, which throughout his ordeal had been dry, rained tears upon her cheeks.

"Are you quite safe, my little lamb, my angel child?" he asked, as soon as he could articulate, holding her out at arm's length and looking at her with anxious eyes.

"Oh, I'm all right," chirped Chrystal; "but Jean Bayard fell down and hurt his head and his leg, too."

Blake raised his rugged face still wet with tears. "I do not understand anything but that she is safe. I cannot seem to realize anything but that my little Chrystal has been brought home again. You have done this, sir? There is no measure to my gratitude. I cannot say more now; I am too upset, too bewildered. But you understand."

"Mistaire Blake, sir, there is nothing to say. When I heard that the beautiful child was lost—stolen—immediately there flashed through me an idea who might have done this thing. I could not rest until I

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found her. You owe me nothing. Not one thing."

Katherine caught his hand. "I know now why I have always had such trust in you," she said.

Blake saw nothing but the face of the little child whom he held as if he feared she might be snatched from him. Suddenly he turned toward the detective: "Let everybody who has helped me in this trouble be richly rewarded. You hear that, O'Donnell?"

"I'm dreadful hungry," piped up Chrystal.

"Of course you are. You're starving. Come into the dining-room. We will find everything there to eat. I'm starved too," and he devoured his child with kisses.

"O papa, you're all rough!"

"My darling angel, papa did not mean to be."

"It's your face, it's all rough and sandy."

"I haven't shaved since you were carried away, little sweetheart."

"Funny papa. Here, carry me out to the dining-room on your shoulder."

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"O'Donnell!" exclaimed Blake, "tell the housekeeper to give you, and the men you had gathered together, all you can eat and drink. I want everybody under this roof to-night to rejoice with me. Has any one telephoned the good news to Mrs. Blake? We must do so at once."

"I have already done so, sir," answered George Livingston.

"Come, little sweetheart!" cried Blake, swinging Chrystal to his shoulder, and they all went into the dining-room—all, except Katherine and St. Hilaire.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE sun shone in through the large windows and across the floor of the dining-room at Meadowlands. The maple trees outside were encased in corselets of silver, and their branches, swayed by the wind, clashed musically like mail-clad arms. As far as the eye could reach, across the lawn, over the meadows to woods and lake, the country wore a mantle of dazzling white, while every twig in the landscape sparkled in the sunlight as if each tree were set with diamonds.

Katherine Blake, bringing with her a breeze of the crisp outdoors, came in to the open fire. She was brilliantly handsome with the fresh color in her cheeks, although the traces of her recent suffering still lingered in her eyes.

"Come to the fire and get warm after our walk," she said to St. Hilaire.

He came and stood beside her.

"You look as strong and well as though the past few days had been no more than a

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recreation for you. Are you really not worn out?" she asked, looking at him with solicitude.

"I have that within which makes me fresh as the lark," he replied gayly.

He looked about the pleasant dining-room with much interest. "The last time I was here I climbed in through that window over the flower-beds; and the silverware, which is now in the sideboard, I found carefully packed up in the centre of the table."

"What were you doing under the window at that time of night?" she asked in playful cross-examination.

"I picked a little flower," he replied, taking out his pocketbook. "See, it is broken; only half the flower remains, for in the excitement it was crushed; but I have kept it, and I now offer it as proof."

"It is accepted," she replied, putting out her hand.

They were interrupted by a small child bounding into the room and embracing St. Hilaire.

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"Good morning, little Chrystal. You are very well this morning?"

"I'm all right. I found Flossie Grey up in the playroom. She's been awfully neglected for months, but she's the greatest friend in the world with little Jean Bayard;—and Tabby's had kittens;—and my mamma is all well again and is coming down from the city as fast as she can, just to see me."

St. Hilaire smiled at Katherine.

"Are you going to live with us all the time?" asked Chrystal quickly.

"Why do you ask?"

"I don't know. You sort of act that way."

"Would you like me to live with you always?"

"Oh, so much!"

"Some day I shall be your brother, and then we shall see each other very often."

"Oh, when will you be my brother?"

"I cannot say, myself."

"I do hope it will be soon."

"So do I."

Katherine caught her little sister up to kiss

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her, and when she put her down again Chrystal ran away laughing with excitement.

"I'm going to tell mamma," she cried, much elated. "She'll be so glad to know I'm going to have a brother. She often used to say she wished I'd had a little brother to play with me. Only you'll be a big brother; but I'm glad it's you." And she ran out of the room.

The news of her child's rescue had lifted Mrs. Blake from a bed of illness and brought her to Meadowlands as fast as steam could travel. When the first transport of joy passed she came to St. Hilaire and thanked him, almost without words, but in a manner so touching as to bring the moisture to his eyes.

"There is nothing in the world I would not do for you. Oh, I can never repay you, never!"

"There is nothing to repay," answered St. Hilaire quickly. "When I heard that little Chrystal was lost I could not rest until she was found again, that is all!"

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"There is nothing to forgive, it was just a mistake"

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Zachary Blake had already made the *amende honorable* by holding out his hand to St. Hilaire and saying bluntly: "I have misjudged you, Mr. Bayard, and wrongly suspected you. I can only ask your forgiveness."

"There is nothing to forgive, it was just a mistake."

"I realize," continued Blake in his straightforward way, "that as between yourself and my daughter things have gotten outside of the boundaries of my empire; I can only say that I give her to you willingly, but——"

"O Mistaire Blake, pardon me for the oversight, but in the excitement I forgot," interrupted St. Hilaire, with great courtliness. "I have the honaire to ask in marriage the hand of your daughter, Miss Blake."

"There is nothing, Bayard, which we can refuse, but——"

"Mistaire Blake, I do not ask it as a reward for what I may have done. Before that Miss Blake had promised to be my wife, which in America, I think, is all that is necessary; but of course I ask you, sir."

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"As a matter of form?" inquired Blake, smiling.

"As a matter of form," answered St. Hilaire gravely.

"I have already said I give my consent willingly, for you, Bayard, are a man. I've had enough of your princes of Moroccos or Moravias. I've said that Katherine should choose for herself. She'd do it anyway. But before we go any farther in this matter let me tell you about the rumors that are in circulation in regard to my financial standing——"

"Mistaire Blake, that does not make the least difference to me."

"But it is important to me. It is true that I have been rather unfortunate lately, but those who think they have got me down are going to miss their guess. Zachary Blake is not down and out by a long shot. And I declare to you that my daughter shall be just as well provided for on her wedding-day as if she married a lord!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

MRS. ELEANOR ROMAINÉ had something weighing upon her usually active and alert mind which brought a shade of thoughtfulness to her violet eyes. It was more than the gentle melancholy engendered by the frozen landscape, for she had only to command her automobile and go whizzing back to the city; but she herself had elected to remain over another night and return with the family. The pensive shadow vanished from her brow, and a slight flush appeared upon her cheek, when at one time in the day she found herself alone in the room with St. Hilaire.

"I am so happy in the thought that you are safe and well. Until now I have hardly had a chance to tell you so. And I am so glad, too, that you are happy," she said impulsively.

For a moment he looked at her fixedly, and the flush deepened upon her cheek as she quickly answered the question which she thought she read in his clear eyes.

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"You remember what I told you?" she began.

"I remember. I believed you, although it seems to me now as if it were impossible that I should have believed you."

"The wish was father to the thought. I thought that they ought to be. I wanted them to be, and so in my mind they were in love with each other," she went on rapidly, with a frankness which was as much her nature as the soft feline quality. "But it was wicked of me to misinform you. What must you think——"

"I think that the world is very beautiful. That is quite enough," replied St. Hilaire quickly.

"And we can always be friends?" she asked holding out her hand.

"Always, Mrs. Romaine."

"You were my guardian once, you know. That was a long time ago, when I was younger than you. Now that I am *older* than you, I am going to turn the tables. Whether it suits your quixotic humor or not, I am going to

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repay, together with the interest which has accrued, the sum of money which you once settled upon me."

"I gave it to you without thought of ever receiving it back again——"

"There is no use arguing with me. I insist upon having my own way in this matter. I am going to pay the money over to your attorney as trustee, with the strictest provision that you are not to give it away again."

"I understand. If I give it away I shall forfeit all title to it," laughed St. Hilaire. "That reminds me to say that the faithful Jules Gérin was to sell some stock for me. He has discovered in me a great financier. I must send him a telegraphic despatch and ascertain if I am rich."

"In any event, I shall insist upon your taking this money," repeated Mrs. Romaine, with an emphatic nod of the head as she left the room.

St. Hilaire, following her with his eyes, saw at the farther end of the room Chrystal, who

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had been playing there for some time as quiet as a mouse.

"What are you doing, my little one?" he inquired gayly, going over to her.

"Playing with my dollies. And what do you suppose has happened, Mr. Bayard? Flossie Grey and little Jean Bayard have got engaged and are going to get married. Isn't that a *de-lightful* surprise? I'm going to change Flossie's name. I'm going to name her Katherine Blake. Now I'm going upstairs for a few minutes where my mamma is resting. Won't you please look after my dolls while I am gone?"

It was evening when St. Hilaire saw Mrs. Blake again. As the whole family assembled in the parlor just before dinner she entered the room with her arm through that of Mrs. Romaine, and coming up to St. Hilaire took his hand.

"Mrs. Romaine has been telling us something extraordinary about you. She has told us all about you," she said with a suggestion of awe in her tone.

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Eleanor laughed a little guiltily. "You know I adore mysteries, Monsieur, and I have also a love for the dramatic. I have betrayed you."

"Only to think!" exclaimed Mrs. Blake, "it was you who saved our silver and perhaps our lives here in this very house two years ago. It was you who sent that insolent Prince of Moravia, who wasn't one at all, packing. You risked your life to find and bring our little Chrystal back to us, and you are *not* Mr. Jean Bayard, but the Marquis Raymond—I don't know how many names in between—de St. Hilaire. Why did you keep every one in ignorance of your real name?"

"The name 'Jean Bayard' belongs to me," he replied. "When I first came to this country I threw away all the others. I had made a vow; the de St. Hilaires have always kept their vows, no matter what they were, cost what it might cost; and so I kept mine. Jean Bayard is my name," he repeated with a slight accent of pride, "and he will become a citizen of your country," and he turned

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instinctively toward Katherine, who was beside him.

"I do not know the Marquis de St. Hilaire," said Katherine, looking at him half shyly, half coquettishly, "but Jean Bayard"—there was a note of ineffable tenderness in the way she spoke the name—"Jean Bayard I do know, and his name I wish to keep."

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